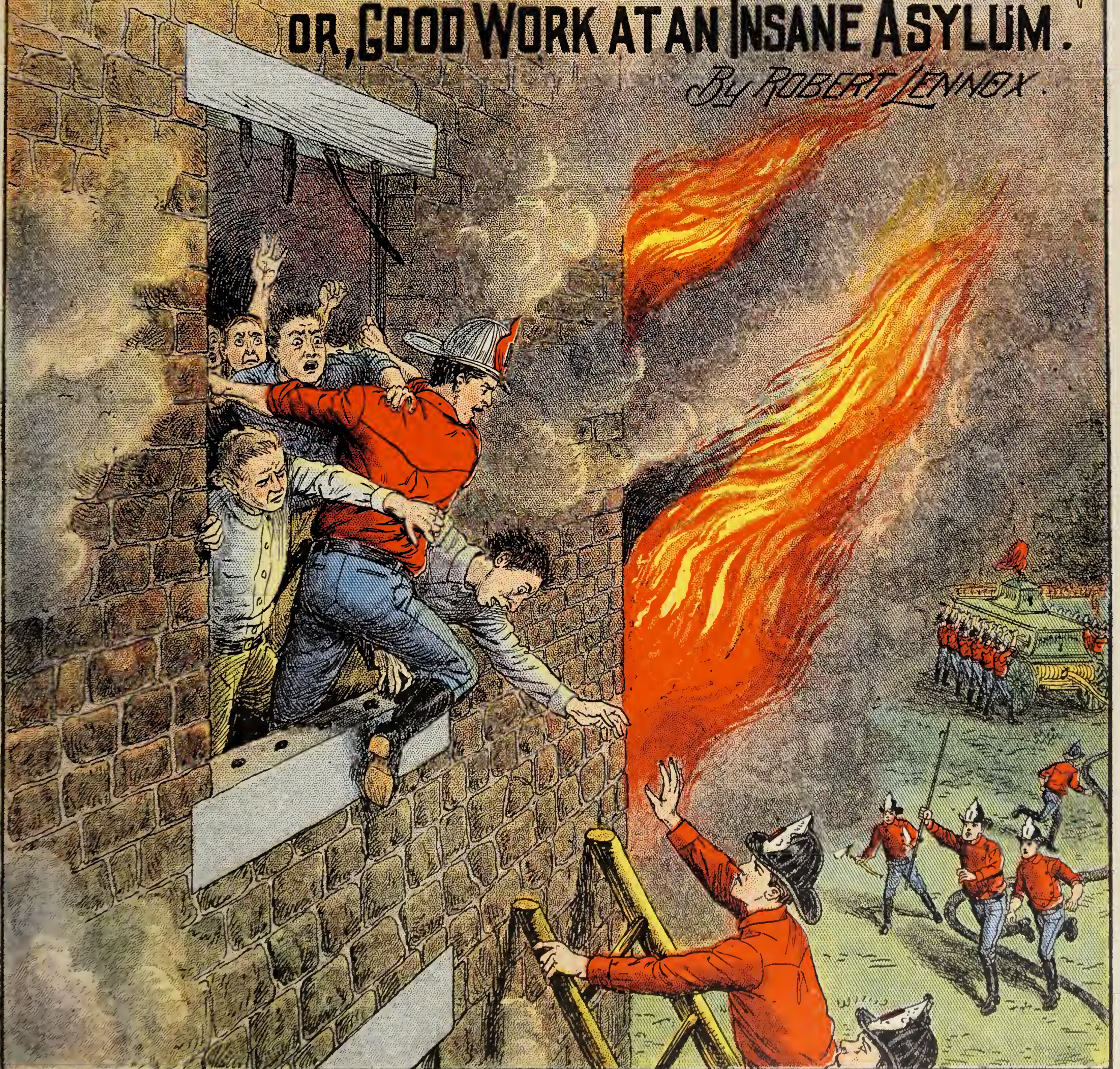


EVERY WEEK.

By ROBERT LENNOX.



Just as Wide reached the window, the lunatics succeeded in breaking out the bars. They made a mad effort to get out, nearly throwing him to the ground. He clung to the casing for his life, and yelled for help.

WIDE AWAKE WEEKLY

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Young Wide Awake's Deadly Peril

OR,

GOOD WORK AT AN INSANE ASYLUM

By **ROBERT LENNOX**

CHAPTER I.

A PLOT AGAINST THE WASHINGTONS.

"I'll get even with that rascal of a Dick Halstead yet!"

"You'll have to be slicker than ever before to do it," replied the companion of the first speaker.

"Well, I've a better plan than ever before," answered the first youth, "and let me tell you right now, Gerald Keating, that I'll fix that whole Washington layout for good and all."

This pleasant remark came from the lips of Fred Parsons, the captain of the Neptune Fire Company, which was the rival to Dick Halstead's company, the Washington No. 1. For months and months the feeling of bitterness had been stirred up by the hatred of Fred Parsons, but thus far his plots and counterplots had availed naught.

"Dick Halstead is lucky, and he fools a lot of folks with his pretended frankness, but I know there's a yellow streak in him, and I will show it up yet. That's all."

"Well, Fred, you want to be careful. Remember, he and his crowd are a tough lot of scrappers, even if we don't like them. What is your plan?" asked Keating.

He was just as ardent a hater of the Washingtons and their popular young captain, Young Wide Awake, as he was known throughout Belmont. But Gerald had had some bitter experiences and he was no fool.

"Well, I'll tell you. There have been a lot of robberies lately in this part of Belmont, and particularly of several

of the big grocery stores. What do you think of a plan for laying one of these steals at the doors of the Washingtons?"

"It sounds good to me, if it can be worked. What is your exact scheme, Fred?"

"Well, it necessitates a little dirty work ourselves, but if we work it right it will be a cinch. Do you remember that last fire down at Smith's big wholesale grocery?"

"Yes, sure I do. It was the hottest job we've had in months."

"Well, then," continued Parsons, "I learned that they had a long tunnel-like arrangement from their sidewalk in the alley to the storage cellar under the stables. In those underground store-rooms they store up big buckets of candy, molasses, canned goods and every sort of good thing imaginable."

"What's that got to do with the Washingtons? You know they won't take anything, much as we hate them. They've had plenty of chances to help themselves."

"I know that, but my idea is just this. We can get into that alley entrance the next dark, stormy night, and lift a bunch of the candy boxes, crackers and canned goods that young fellows would like. Then we will get some of the boys on the other side of town to send in a false alarm. The Washingtons will go to it on the jump, and even take their fool purp Trot with them, and so we can have a clear sweep at their engine-house."

"Aha! I see your idea in a way," said Gerald Keating with a chuckle.

"Yes. We can take a ladder and get into the club-rooms of their engine-house on Holmes Street from the rear while

they are gone. It won't take much maneuvering to smuggle that junk into their rooms and conceal it."

"Then you intend to peach on them the next day when the other robbery is discovered?" asked Keating.

"Exactly. But meanwhile there are a lot of little details which we can work up to make it even more interesting. Just keep still about this, Gerald, even among our own fellows, for I think that lately even the Neptunes seem to be getting religion, some of them."

"Good idea, Fred. I think you're right about it. Well, so long!"

Keating turned to leave the Neptune fire-house, and he put his hat on ready to hustle forth on his way home, for it was getting along toward supper-time.

"So long, Gerald—mum's the word. I'll get Brick Houston in on this deal; he ought to know a bunch of the town fellows who could work the whole thing out for us, if it meant anything for them."

"Well, Fred, we can't pay them anything with the club funds so low as they are now. You just remember that we had to buy a lot of new hose lately, and then there were two brand-new ladders which ate up a good deal of the subscription money."

"Fear not about that, old boy," said Fred Parsons with an ugly leering laugh. "My old man is sore on that Dick Halstead so badly that he talks about him at the supper table every night. I guess I can touch him for a little root of all evil to plant in the garden of trouble. What do you think?"

"You ought to know, I guess. Well, good-night—I'm nearly starved, and I've got to get home to the feeding grounds or you'll have a place to fill in your ranks—and that place will be mine!"

With a farewell wave of his hand Keating hurried out of the engine-house and disappeared into the darkness.

Fred Parsons sat down at the desk chair, mumbling to himself, making notes on some paper with a fountain pen, and writing a list of some sort.

For over an hour he sat there planning and planning. It boded ill for Dick Halstead and his friends, for Parsons was a cunning and unscrupulous fellow.

"I guess this scheme will land him, all right! Let us see what turns up in the meantime." He put his pen into his pocket and folded the papers up, tucking them away into his pockets. "Great guns, but it is late—I had no idea I'd wasted so much time here. I'll not get a bite of supper if I don't get an awful wiggle on."

Just then Brick Houston came strolling into the clubhouse.

"Hello, Brick!" cried Parsons. "I've a great plan that I'll tell you all about if you walk over towards the house with me."

"Well, I'm ready for anything in the line of getting even. Fire away, Fred!" answered Brick Houston, who was one of the toughest fellows in Belmont, and at the same time one of the best scrappers in the district.

The two Neptunes left the engine-house arm in arm, and Parsons unfolded his tricky scheme to Houston. The tough fellow chuckled to himself with joy at the prospect of their success.

"We'll work it easy," said he. "I know just such a gang

as we need, and I'll work the matter so that the Neptunes can be at the false fire-alarm at the same time. That way they can't lay it onto us."

"Brick—you deserve your name," said Fred. "Come on into the house and we'll chew the rag with the governor about it and work up our little scheme. He's a pretty slick insurance man, and that is a business that takes a good deal of gray matter. So he may help us in this."

The Neptunes went into the house, and were soon in conference with the elder Parsons, who, as you boys may well imagine, entered into the scheme with might and main.

Just at the instant that they entered the Parsons residence it happened that Dick Halstead passed along the street with Kitty Lester, his pretty sweetheart.

"There's a fine pair of fellows, Kitty," said he in a low voice as he nodded his head towards the two young fellows entering the residence. "I wonder what they'll be ten years from now."

"Well, if they keep on at the present speed," said the girl with a quiet laugh, "they will be landed in all the comforts of the State penitentiary. They have a great future."

"Well, it is really a pity," said Wide, "for if Fred Parsons used his really bright mind for good as diligently as he does for evil purposes he would make a success in life."

"Let's don't bother over him," said Kitty. "I'd much rather talk over our plans for the parties this fall, wouldn't you? We have had enough from Fred Parsons, and I hope he will behave himself for awhile."

"You are right—let's do put him out of our minds and think no more about him than he does of us!"

Dick escorted Kitty up to her house, and they talked of pleasanter subjects. Little did he think that at that very instant his name was being considered by three very determined and unscrupulous persons, with the virtuous aim of landing him behind the prison bars for a deed of which he was guiltless.

But such is the strangeness of real life—and what Dick did not know gave him no worry. If we knew all the trouble that was coming to us in this troublesome old world there would be much less happiness than there is.

And wise men do say that there is mighty little of that even now.

But Dick blissfully enjoyed the company of his fair friend and when they reached the house yielded to her entreaties to come inside for a few minutes.

"Hello, Dick!" cried Mr. John Lester, Kitty's father. "I am glad to see you again, and glad to know that you stand all the wear and tear of fire company rivalry."

"I certainly thrive on it, Mr. Lester," replied our hero to the jovial railroad magnate. "I guess the heat must act on me as it does in a hot-house on the early plants. But I can't say that I look very much like an early flower. In fact, I am so tired that I feel like the last rose of summer!"

"That'll do for you, young man," laughed his friend heartily.

Just then he stopped and listened.

Down towards the factory district of the town was the sound of a toot-toot-toot-toot. It was the distress signal from a factory building.

"Great Scott!" cried Wide, "there's something wrong

there. It's a queer time of evening for a factory to be blowing its whistle!"

"It is certainly odd. Let's go and see!" cried Mr. Lester, and grabbing their hats they hurried outside.

Something was indeed the matter, for as they rushed into the street the whistle became more noisy, if possible, and another whistle took up the alarm.

"It's not a fire, or we would have heard the alarm!" cried Mr. Lester.

"Yes, that's true. It must be something serious, though—look at the people running."

The streets were being filled with curious, anxious townspeople, who joined them in their race towards the factory.

Suddenly they heard a noise which filled them with dismay.

It was the ominous bang! bang! bang! of gunfire.

"What on earth can it be?" asked Mr. Lester breathlessly, for they had been running at a hot clip, and he was getting along in years.

"It's too serious for me!" cried a man next them, who slackened down his speed immediately.

"No gun play for me!" said another man, and it was noticeable that most of the people on the street lost their curiosity with strange quickness as soon as they heard the shots, which still continued at random.

Toot! toot! toot! toot! toot! went the whistles.

"I'm game if you are, Mr. Lester," cried Wide. And they raced on.

CHAPTER II.

FIGHTING THE RIOTERS.

Wide and Mr. Lester did not falter in their progress until they came to the very street on which the factory was located.

"Something queer about that, Dick," said the older gentleman.

"Look at the crowd of men and boys!" cried Wide. "It looks like a riot to me—watch the bricks fly!"

"You've hit the nail on the head," said Mr. Lester. "It is a riot of some sort. We'd better advance cautiously."

The two slowed down from their run and walked quietly into the crowd which surrounded the big factory building.

Not a light showed in the great structure, but still the whistle tooted noisily.

As they came closer the two friends understood what the trouble was. A number of strikers from the big furniture factory, for such it was, were bombarding the building because inside it were housed the strike-breakers which the company had imported from the city.

This much Mr. Lester learned from a man who stood near them watching the crowd.

Ever and anon a window would be heard shattering as a brick was hurled through it from the hands of an irate striker.

"We'll get even with the company for the way they have treated us!" cried an excited man. "We've just begun on this!"

"I wonder where the police are?" said Mr. Lester to Dick, who stood quiet and observing at his side. "There is apt to be a lot more harm done than the breaking of windows, I think!"

"Yes," answered Young Wide Awake, watching the men murmur to themselves, "it seems to me as if they had just begun."

By this time the Belmont police had been rounded up and were hurrying down to the scene of the trouble, for ordinarily it was a quiet and orderly town which required little police activity.

"Get out of the way here, men!" cried the leader of the police, and he tried to scatter the crowd which was gathering in greater numbers all the time.

The men, growling and murmuring to themselves, fell back in one place only to surge forward in another.

"Look there!" cried Wide, pointing to a little fight which had begun between some of the ringleaders and the officers, when suddenly the very ground was shaken by a terrific explosion.

Bang! Boom! Boom! How it echoed and re-echoed in the night air!

"Look out!" cried Mr. Lester involuntarily, and he and Dick pressed back.

It was well they did, for as they spoke the walls of a wing of the big factory nearest them began to totter and fell with a great crash of brick and broken masonry.

The crowd yelled madly and then ran back. Another explosion was heard.

"Now we've fixed them!" cried a ragged desperate man near the two friends, and he waved his cap in the air.

"Great Scott, Dick, they must have a train of dynamite bombs laid around the factory!" cried Mr. Lester, aghast.

"It's something of the sort!" replied Wide; "and these few policemen are not able to cope with the crowd, that's certain."

The crowd surged forward now, and the strikers and the hoodlums posing as strikers, who far outnumbered them, all grabbed bricks and broken pieces of stone and showered them into the windows.

Bang! bang! Another volley of shots poured forth from the windows of the factory.

"They are armed in there, and there'll be heavy bloodshed if this keeps up much longer, Dick!" said Mr. Lester. "Is there no way in which we can help?"

"Yes, there is!" cried Young Wide Awake, his quick wit coming to the rescue. "Follow me, Mr. Lester. I've a great scheme!"

He rushed out of the crowd which was backed up on the sidewalk watching the destruction in the front.

The elder man followed him, trusting to the youth's nimble mind for a solution of the trouble.

"I'm going to send in an alarm of fire and get all three of the volunteer companies down here! Even the Neptunes will help in this, I know, for while they are a bunch of curs in many ways, still they can fight fire, and I think they can a riot mob, too."

Dick ran to a private house near by and knocked at the door.

A woman came timidly to the door, fearing that it was one of the rioters.

"What do you want?" she asked, fearful of violence, refusing to open the door.

"I want to telephone the fire department to help disperse this mob. May I use your 'phone?"

"No, you can't! I know you're one of those strikers, and I won't let any of them in here!" she cried with determination.

"Nothing of the sort!" cried Dick; "I am captain of the Washington Fire Company, and my name is Dick Halstead. If you don't let me 'phone there's apt to be worse around here for all of you than a mob, because that crowd is getting more violent every moment! Please help me by letting me use your telephone."

"If you are Dick Halstead it is all right," cried the woman, peering through the crack in the door. "Oh, it is Young Wide Awake after all—you can help yourself. I didn't mean to be mean, but I was frightened."

"That's all right, madam," answered Dick as he ran towards the telephone which hung on the wall near the hall entrance. "Thanks for your courtesy."

"It is no courtesy, young man, for anything that I can do for the best young fireman in Belmont I am only too glad to do. I have never met you, but you have been of service to me more than once by the quick work of the Washingtons. I know you by sight, since the time you saved my stable and horses."

"We always try to do our duty, ma'am." Dick jingled the telephone bell again and again. "As usual, the girl is asleep, I guess!"

Tinkle! tinkle!

At last he received the response from the tardy operator.

"Hello, there! Wake up! Give me Chief Pelton—you know the number!"

In a few seconds he had the chief on the wire.

"Hello, chief! There is a riot down here on Perkins Street—a lot of strikers and bums are trying to blow up the furniture factory, and they're making a good job of it. The police can't do a thing with them. Won't you order the companies down here and we can drive them back with the water? I'll wait here."

"Yes, my boy—you're a brick!" answered the chief. "I'll be right down myself, and order the companies in the meantime."

"All right. Good-by!" called Dick as he quickly rang off.

"Now give me the Washingtons, No. 1," he called to the central operator. "Hello! Who is this? Who?—speak louder! Oh, it's you, Terry! Say, there's a riot on down here at the furniture factory on Perkins Street. The chief says to run the companies onto the job and we'll drive back this bunch. So hurry up the boys and I'll meet you here."

"Thot Oi will, sure, and wid pleasure," answered the spunky Irish lad as they rang off.

"Central, central, give me the Neptune's engine-house. Hello! Hello! Who is this? Oh, George Anderson! Yes—well, this is Dick Halstead, and there is a riot down on Perkins Street, and I 'phoned to get you fellows to help drive back the strikers—there is going to be bloodshed if something is not done, and we must all fight shoulder to shoulder now for the sake of Belmont."

"All right, we'll be down there at once. Chief Pelton

just 'phoned, anyway—see you later." George Anderson rang off. He was the squarest boy on the Neptunes, and Dick was glad that he had answered the 'phone.

"I would hate to have had to talk to Parsons, or he would have thought I was trying to make up with him. But I'd rather be misunderstood in a crisis like this than to have false pride lose lives."

Wide ran out of the house, after thanking the lady for the use of her telephone.

"That is certainly a fine, manly fellow," she thought to herself as she bolted her door behind him. "If it wasn't for him and his kind I don't know what would happen to Belmont. That other crowd of young fellows I wouldn't trust as far as I could see them."

"It's all right, Mr. Lester," cried our young hero to Kitty's father as he stood waiting at the front gate. "I wish you'd take my watch and this flat pocketbook. It doesn't hold much—but what little there is is valuable. There will be some excitement here in a minute, and you'd better stay back here and let us boys fight it out."

Just as he spoke the cling! cling! cling! of the approaching fire companies was heard far down the street, above the noise of the crowd.

"Great Scott, but that's quick work, all right!" said Mr. Lester.

"Yes—I'll bet it is the Washingtons in the lead, too," said Wide with justifiable pride, and indeed he was right. The boys were speeding down the dark street as never before.

They realized that to-night was to be a different sort of a fight from the ordinary struggle with the flames.

A block behind them came the Neptunes, tugging fiercely at their machine, and close behind them in turn were the Torrents, the older fire-fighters, whose house was farther away from the scene of the trouble.

"Here come the fire companies! Don't let them near!" cried a tough-looking man who seemed to be a leader of the desperate characters of the crowd.

"Down with them!" cried his followers, and they picked up bricks and stones.

A shower of these dangerous missiles greeted the brave young Washingtons and clattered over their machines, making nicks and bumps, but, fortunately, none of the boys were hit. Right into the thick they charged, striking right and left with the handles of their fire axes.

The leader, armed with a heavy club, charged back at the boys, and raised his stick to strike Hal Norton, the lieutenant who was leading his boys in Wide's absence.

But right behind that person Young Wide Awake sallied up and the club was wrenched from his grasp from the rear. He whirled around angrily.

"Don't you monkey with me, boy!" he cried in a terrible voice, but he said no more, for a slashing uppercut under his bristling chin put a quietus on him for several minutes and he toppled over.

Biff! Another blow had landed on the jaw of the man behind him, for Wide was roused to the fighting fury of a tiger.

"Right ahead, boys!" cried the young captain. "Hurry to the plug, and get the water on them. Then we'll fix them!"

"No, you won't!" cried the strikers, who closed in around

them and began to demolish the machine, or at least tried their best.

But Terry Rourke with a yell began throwing grenades, and the crowd, unused to such unpleasant missiles, fell back for an instant.

"Now's our chance!" cried Hal, and he swung around one side, striking out with his fire-axe handle, while Wide led the charge on the other.

The boys pulled with a will, and in a jiffy the machine had been dragged up to the fire-plug.

"Wow!" yelled the rioting strikers, and began to shower bricks on them, but by this time the Neptunes were upon the scene and they fought their way through the crowd as best they could.

"That gives us a chance!" shouted Wide. "Now quick with the nozzles!"

"It's going hard with the Neptunes. If we wanted to get even all we have to do is to let 'em alone," said fat Sam Bangs, at the young captain's elbow, as he pantingly pulled a heavy length of hose into place.

"Slam, we don't try to get even. In a case like this it's all pull together!" Wide's noble nature was too fine for such petty vengeance.

"Well, I guess you're right, Dick," agreed Sam as he coupled the lengths together.

"Ready now?" called the young captain.

"All ready!" shouted Hal in reply, and it was well, for a crowd had closed in on the Neptunes and the Torrents and it was going badly with the fire-fighters there.

"Club 'em! Club 'em!" cried the roughs. The police further up the street were fighting back, vainly trying to curb the rioters there, while ever and anon a gunshot would come from the windows of the factory, where the defenders were trying to frighten off the crowd with blank cartridges.

The crowd did not frighten! Indeed, now was the crucial moment, for just at this instant fifty feet away from the scene of the fight of our young friends several of the strikers had sneaked up to the great wagon entrance of the furniture factory.

Here, under shelter of the dark, they were villainously saturating the woodwork with oil, and a burly ruffian was starting the flames in this vulnerable spot.

Had his plan succeeded the factory would have been blazing in a few moments.

But the tide of battle had turned.

Swish-sh-sh-sh-sh! And a great arch of water streamed out over the crowd, which scattered beneath the cold, stinging stream.

Swish! and another stream from Hal Norton's nozzle had hit the man with the oil-can, and the little flame just starting up spluttered and went out.

Likewise the two would-be incendiaries! They went out as fast as their nimble legs could carry them, for the night was cool and that awful force of bitter cold water cooled their ardor and bravery.

Hal's quick eyes had saved the factory from fire.

"Right into the crowd!" directed Wide at the other nozzle, and the stream was turned onto the mob surrounding the besieged Neptunes.

The assailants scattered for an instant, and Wide, forgetting all personal hatred, sprang towards the other company.

"Let me give a hand!" he cried generously, and with Terry he swung onto the machine and dragged it out of the crowd, while Tommy Grogan and Joe Darrell enjoyed themselves with some artistic gunnery from the hose nozzle.

Bricks began to fly on the devoted young firemen, and more than one hit the mark and left ugly bruises—but the boys were not minding such trifles now.

Fred Parsons, ignoring Wide, hurried towards the other plug, and in a jiffy the Neptunes had two more streams playing on the crowd, which backed further and further away.

Meanwhile the Torrent Company had fought their way through, and they went further down the street, to take up a position there.

"Well, we've licked this crowd of rioters!" declared Chief Pelton as he hurried up and patted Wide on the shoulders. "If it hadn't been for your quick wit, my boy, there'd be one of the biggest incendiary fires in the history of Belmont by this time."

Fred Parsons was standing near, and at these words of praise for his hated enemy, Dick, he gritted his teeth, and with a vicious scowl hurried away. He was too mean to credit Wide with even having helped his own company, the Neptunes, in their time of need.

"Drat him! Every one praises him, and I get no credit at all! Well, we shall see!" He hurried up to the nozzle of his own company.

"Dick," continued the chief, "I find that several parts of the woodwork had been saturated with oil, ready for firing. It's lucky we came as we did!"

"Yes, I agree with you, chief!" answered Young Wide Awake. "The cops have the factory surrounded now, and have driven the strikers away. I am sorry for the poor fellows, chief, and yet this is a poor way to win their case."

"You are right, Dick. But the chief trouble with this, as every strike on record nearly, is that the poor workmen do not do the chief damage. It is done by hoodlums and desperate characters who join in out of pure cussedness. I have seen it over and over again. Well, I will go the rounds and see how the other boys are fixed. Did they hurt your machine in that first tussle?"

"No, sir. They were just licked in time." Dick turned away and walked over towards the Washington machine.

Just as he joined the group around it—swish! A cold, icy stream of the water was swung onto them, from the rear.

Dick whirled around, dripping wet.

The stream had come from the nozzle of the Neptunes! He heard several loud guffaws from Brick Houston, and he stepped quickly towards the group of Neptunes, his eyes flashing.

"Excuse us, won't you?" called Gerald Keating tauntingly. "It was an accident, and we wouldn't have done it purposely for worlds!"

Brick laughed again loudly, but there was really nothing to say and Dick whirled around and returned to his machine.

"The bums! Just like them," snorted Terry. "They are a boonch of sneaks—and they don't appreciate kindness!"

"I told you so!" piped in fat Sam Bangs, "you'd orter let 'em get theirs in that crowd!" and the irate fat youth mopped the water off his clothes.

"Well, boys," said Wide, "we'll just lay low—our time will come soon, just as it always does. We never lost a trick there yet—when we bided our time!"

The boys remained on guard the rest of the night, and by morning a large crowd of extra deputies had been sworn in to guard the factory, and the Washingtons, tired and cold, went back to the fire-house.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Fred Parsons, "I guess we sorter fixed young smartie Halstead this trip!"

"Fred, I think you're a dirty, low-down sneak!" declared George Anderson. "For two cents I'd quit you and your low-down crowd all for good!"

He whirled on his heel with this parting shot and went home.

CHAPTER III.

TERRY TURNS A TRICK.

The next day all the troubles of the strikers were settled, but you may be sure that Wide did not forget the scurvy trick played on him by Fred Parsons.

Wide started down toward the engine-house early in the afternoon to look over the machine for any bumps or injury to the apparatus or hose.

"That was a different proposition last night from any we've had in a good while, wasn't it, Terry?" he asked the young Irishman, who had preceded him to the Holmes Street house.

"Yis, and there was a bit of dirrty wurrk from those Neptunes the loikes av which Oi've niver seen!" snorted the indignant Terry. "Bedad, and Oi'd-loike to have a good chance to fix thim for it."

"You mustn't get too worked up, old boy," answered Wide. "We will have our chance before long, and in the meantime we must clean house."

"It needs it, Dick," said Hal Norton, who came in just as he spoke.

"Just look at the mud and dirt on the Washington No. 1 machine!"

"It was in wid a dirrty-minded boonch—no wonder!" snorted Terry.

He grabbed up a cloth and started scraping the mud off the wheels vigorously. It needed it badly, for the boys had been too tired in the early morning to attend to it.

"We must clean up the hose, too," said Wide, so he and Ted, with Hal and Joe at the other end, yanked the long hose sections out in front of the house, and with sleeves rolled up and rubber boots on they began the work of cleaning.

Terry kept mumbling to himself about the Neptunes until finally Dick became indignant.

"You're letting that business prey on your mind, Terry. We're all getting sick of hearing about the rascals, and as a punishment you've got to clean the windows upstairs, as soon as you polish off the wheels."

Terry laughed good-naturedly.

"You can't faze me wid hard wurrk—so never you mind about that."

The boys plugged away hard at their cleaning, and finally everything was in ship-shape condition.

They shut up the lower part of the engine-house and went out into the rear to look after anything that might need attention there.

"Now, it's upstairs with you," cried Wide to Terry. "Don't you leave a single dust-speck on the windows or we'll court-martial you."

"Begorrah—Oi am right after the specks from now on," replied Terry Rourke, and he hustled upstairs with a full pail of water and some cloths and soap.

As he came forward toward the open window he saw two familiar figures coming up the street.

"And what in the name av St. Patrick are those two rascals doing here?" thought Terry to himself.

It was the manly couple whom the Washingtons most disliked, Fred Parsons and his familiar shadow, Gerald Keating.

The two Neptunes walked slowly along the other side of the street, and Terry dodged behind the wall of the window, watching them covertly.

"They must be closed up for the season!" sneered Fred Parsons to his mate. "Not a sign of life." This was true, for the boys were out in the rear and the front doors closed.

"Let's have a look, Fred," answered Keating. "Maybe we can get a line on the geography of their engine-house for our little scheme."

"Aha!" thought the Irish youth; "so, me foine burrds, you have a little scheme, have you? 'Tis no more than Oi expect!"

The two Neptunes, with apparent carelessness, strolled over to the same side of the street as the engine-house.

"I guess they're all down at the athletic field this afternoon," said Fred, "certainly they aren't around here."

"We ought to have no trouble with those back windows, if they are no higher than the front ones," said Keating, glancing toward the very one behind which Terry was concealed.

Little did he realize that every word of their low-voiced conversation was being carried to the ears of a Washington right behind that apparently empty window.

"Oi have the chance av me loife!" thought Terry to himself. "If they only come a little nearer," and he got to laughing so hard to himself that he nearly gave himself away.

The two Neptunes advanced a little closer and Fred Parsons approached the door to peer into the engine-house. Gerald was right at his back.

"At last!" thought Terry, and with a quick movement he swung the big fire-bucketful of water over the sill, and swish!

The bucket's contents landed all over the two Neptunes, and they sprang back dripping.

Both the youths had their very best clothes on, for it was a fine Saturday afternoon, and the soaking they received from Terry's skillful aim was a wonder.

Not a drop seemed to have been wasted.

Not a stitch of clothing seemed to have been neglected by the miniature Niagara Falls which the Irish boy had launched out of the fire-house window!

But Terry was too crafty to wait for study of the matter.

Instead, he ducked back into the shelter of the darkened room and then rolled on the floor in silent mirth.

"Wow!" yelled the two, surprised, as the cold water chilled them through to the bone.

"You'll pay for this, you villains!" cried Fred Parsons, as he mopped the little rivulets away from his reddened forehead.

"We'll fix you, you curs!" and Gerald shook his fist impotently toward the window, but Terry paid no heed.

The Irish boy was pounding his sides and trying to curb his laughter.

He succeeded well for him, and not a sound apprised the two disgruntled Neptunes as to the author of their wet troubles.

They hurried to the other side of the street, towards Fred Parsons' home, when what was their dismay to run into a bevy of the girls they both knew.

Kitty Lester, Faith Vane, Amy Moulton, Anita Duroc and Marjorie Kent were coming down the street, and they looked first with dismay and then with uncontrolled laughter at the dripping Neptunes.

The two youths did not even stop to speak to the girls, with whom they were none too popular at best, but quickened their steps into a dog-trot, and chased towards dry clothes.

"I wonder what they've been up to?" said Kitty.

"Whatever it was the boys made it lively!" responded Amy.

The girls ran toward the door and knocked and knocked.

No answer!

"What can be doing here, I wonder? There's something queer."

Just then Terry's Irish sense of the ridiculous was the conqueror and he at last broke forth into long peals of laughter.

"Haw! haw! haw!" and he fairly screamed until the tears ran down his face.

"There's some one upstairs who knows about it, at any rate!" said Marjorie Kent, and she knocked again, more loudly.

By this time Hal Norton had stepped into the engine-house from the rear for some utensil or other, and he came rushing towards the door on hearing the knocking.

"Who's there?" he called. But by this time he had reached it.

"Oh, it's you girls! Well, what's the matter?" He stood looking at them surprised.

"Aren't you going to invite us in?" asked Anita with a laugh.

"Nope! It's against our new rules—we're business from

the word go nowadays, and we don't allow any one in except on exhibition day!"

"Where's Wide?" asked Kitty.

"Right here!" answered that young man as he hurried in, brushing the dirt from his knees, for he had been working the hardest of the company.

"Well, we want you all to come up to a little birthday celebration this afternoon to supper at one of the girls' house," said Kitty, "and we were walking downtown, so we dropped by to ask you boys."

"We are glad to come, I know," said Wide. Just then more loud guffaws came from the upper floor, where Terry was still enjoying his joke to himself.

"What is the matter up there?" yelled Hal.

Terry came racing down the pole in answer and looked surprised to see the crowd of girls before the door.

The sight of Faith Vane in particular seemed to sober him up.

"What were those two Neptunes doing here?" asked Kitty, suspecting one of Terry's pranks.

This started the Irish boy into another round of laughter, and finally he controlled himself long enough to narrate about the dousing that he had given them.

"Well, if that doesn't beat all!" laughed Wide as he listened in amazement.

"Oi certainly gave thim rascals a cleaning thot they shure needed. Oi refuse to clean windows any more to-day after such a good job as thot, by Blarney Castle!" said Terry.

"We'll all refuse to do any more work," said the young captain of the Washingtons. "Let's dress up and go with the girls up to that party. We've all done good work to-day, but your job was the best of the lot, Terry, old boy!"

By this time all the boys had come out to the front of the house. They were tickled to accept the unexpected invitation.

As they hustled up to catch up with the girls walking slowly on ahead, when they had brushed up a little, Terry turned to Wide.

"Say, Dick, Oi am shure mishtrusting thot boonch av Neptunes. They are trying to worrk some scheme on the engine-house—Oi heard them talking aboot it before I trun down the water."

"Well, I guess they can't beat us very badly, Terry. They are always up to some low-down tricks. George Anderson is the only whole-souled fellow of the lot."

"Annyway, Oi know they'll bear watching."

He spoke truer than he realized, for that very evening while the Washingtons were enjoying the party supper with the girls Fred Parsons was carrying into execution his dastardly plan to smirch their reputations!

CHAPTER IV.

A ROBBERY AND A FALSE ALARM.

"Now, Brick," said Fred Parsons hurriedly, "are you sure that the gang is trustworthy? Are you certain that they won't peach on us if they get caught up?"

"Aw, cert! That crowd of fellows is the toughest bunch in Belmont; they are afraid of nothing, and yet they are square among themselves. I've fixed them up all right."

"Well, do you think my father gave you enough for them all—that is, forty in advance, making ten apiece and five apiece more afterwards?"

"Yes, of course it is, particularly as they don't have to hold onto any of the swiped goods. They think this a large-sized cinch, so Bill Squiggins, the leader, said to me just to-night." Brick seemed to be satisfied with his work.

Fred shook his head. Now that the project was actually being carried out his heart misgave him, for he did not care to face prison himself.

"Well, I just hope that you judge these four fellows right," said he.

"Of course I do. I believe you are welching now," said Brick with suspicion in his voice. "You'd better not do such a trick with me, Fred Parsons, after fixing it this way for you. If you do you'll get into hotter water than you ever floundered in before!"

Brick was beginning to lose his patience.

"Oh, now, don't get peevish, Brick!" said Fred, trying to placate his confederate. "I am in this all right and we'll carry out everything as we planned. I'm just a bit nervous, for it is a hard job."

"No, it isn't—it is a cinch. Those fellows break into lots stiffer places than that wholesale grocery store, if you only knew it, every week. They are pretty clever thugs when you get right down to it. I know them all. And I'm glad to get even with that lobster of a Dick Halstead and his skate crowd at any risk!"

"So am I!" said Fred, his eyes flashing ominously. "He, or one of them, played me a dirty trick this afternoon that'll cost them dearly!"

"What was that?" asked Brick, who had not seen the two boys when they came into the Parsons house dripping wet.

"Well, it'll keep," said Fred curtly. "Let's get ready for this business. It's pretty near time for Gerald Keating to ring in that false alarm from the other side of town."

Just about this time—it was working along toward nine o'clock and was quite dark—the four thieves were getting busy on the wholesale grocery tunnel.

The business part of town in this section was devoted to

trades which were practically all ended by Saturday noon for the week. Thus the district was almost as deserted as a country graveyard on a stormy night.

"Come on, culls," said Bill Squiggins in a hoarse voice which showed that, although young, he was ruining his throat already with frequent use of fire-water.

"It's down dis street, and into dis alley, ain't it, Bill?" asked Mike, one of the others.

"Shure!" grunted Bill, and they all four skulked into the doorway of a dark store as a pedestrian walked past.

When he had gone on Bill Squiggins took the lead again and soon they had come to the entrance of the tunnel, which in turn led to the storage quarters of the big grocery company.

"Quick, dere, Mike!" whispered Bill in a whisper, and soon the door had been pried open with a skill which proved that these gentlemen were no novices at the art.

In a jiffy they had opened the iron door and slipped in, just as the private watchman of the neighborhood came along the alley.

"I thought I heard a hammer," he muttered to himself. "Sounded like some metal hitting other metal."

He looked up and down the alley, but saw nothing, and the four crooks kept dead silence inside the door.

"I wonder if the Milton Smith Company has locked up all soundly," said the policeman to himself.

He stalked over towards the tunnel entrance, which he knew led under the yard into the storage basements.

"Gee! We're gone!" whispered one of the crooks, but Bill Squiggins was equal to the occasion.

Without a sound he slipped over to the iron doorway, and with both his burly hands he gripped the ring attached to the inside.

The policeman struck the door a ringing blow with his night-stick, but only the echoes answered him. He reached and shoved it, and then pulled, with his hand on the outside handle. There was no giving or rattling.

He did not notice that the padlock was gone, however, because it was quite dark.

So he turned away, up the alley, and the crooks breathed a sigh of satisfaction and relief.

"Dat was a close shave, Bill," said Mike.

"You bet—but we've had wuss ones," said one of the other villains. They prowled along the passage, using a dark-lantern to light their way in advance.

Soon they were in the cellar, and with little trouble found the big crates and piles of canned goods, candies, preserved fruits and the like which they had expected.

"Gee! I could almost set down and guzzle a little meself fer luck!" said one of the thieves.

"Well, if you does you'll get dis over your koko!" grunted Bill Squiggins, who was all business. "According to me

Swiss movement watch—which same I lifted dis evening from a gent on Main Street widout his gettin' next—dere is just about fifteen minutes fer us to get dis loot over to dat engine-house!"

"All right, Bill; you're de capting, and we's wid ye."

So without more ado a number of the crates, canned food and buckets of candy—all stamped with the name of the Milton Smith Company—were carted down the passage-way.

"Hurry up, culls, and bring up dat push-cart which we swiped from dat drunken ragman!" Bill commanded.

The loot was placed in the cart and they started towards the Holmes Street engine-house of the Washingtons by a circuitous and dark route.

"Dere we are, right on de minute!" exclaimed Mike, for as they turned out of the alley the fire-bells rang forth clamorously.

"De Neptunes is right on de job wit deir false alarm, all right!"

"You bet dey is. Dat Brick Houston is quick about any of his schemes. So's dat Fred Parsons," said Bill. "Dere was a lovely pair of crooks spoiled in de makin'!"

"Maybe dey'll be on de job yet, Bill!" and Mike laughed. "You know wot de doctors says about while dere's life dere's hope!"

"You're right, Mike, you're right!"

Clang! clang! The engine bells rang as the Washingtons' machine came tearing down the quiet street in the direction of the false alarm.

The boys had been attending the party when the alarm rang out, but duty came before pleasure, and they did not even wait for their caps, but rushed pell-mell for the Holmes Street house.

The four crooks drew up in the shadow of the trees as the gallant fire crew galloped past with their well-kept machine.

"Dey certainly does get to de fire all right, if dey are goody-goody boys," said Bill Squiggins, forced to admiration against his will.

The boys hurried down to the district from which the alarm had come and had a neck-and-neck race with the Neptunes, who tore madly along the next parallel street.

When they got to the alarm-box they found all quiet, and looked around in vain for signs of distress.

Only Gerald and Fred were in with Brick on the secret of the false alarm, and so the Neptunes were for the most part as sincerely angry as the Washingtons over the false alarm.

Each crew looked suspiciously at the other, but as they were both buncoed there was nothing to do about it.

"We'll simply have to get up some system to fix these marties who ring up false alarms, that's certain." Wide

was quite wrathful, for he and Kitty had been having an unusually sociable time in the hammock on the porch.

Kitty thought a good deal of Wide, but she was rather chary about telling him so, and to-night was one of the blissful evenings when she really said sweet things.

And to be broken short just for a false alarm!

"Well, I wouldn't have minded if it had been a real fire with some excitement as a reward; but this makes me sick," and he was very much out of humor.

The Washingtons reeled their hose in the dim light of their lanterns and prepared to go back over the long distance to the house, for it was away on the other side of town.

Fred Parsons in his sly way thought that this would be a good time for a little pretense.

He stalked over towards the Washingtons, followed closely by Brick and Gerald Keating.

"I think you low-down sneaks of Washingtons sent in this false alarm to-night just for spite!" he blurted out in a loud bravado tone of voice.

"Well, we didn't!" retorted Wide curtly, continuing his preparation for departure. "We were in too good company to want to leave it to have to associate with such as you!"

The shot told. Parsons lost his temper in earnest now.

"Don't you go lording it over me, Dick Halstead! I don't allow no working woman's son to come bossing it around me. My folks are decent, and I don't have to hang around and toady to rich people. My mother doesn't do work in a cheap office—she's a lady!"

"You're a liar!" shouted Dick, his cheeks burning with rage. True, his mother had been forced to work in an office when his father suddenly died, leaving her to support Dick when he was a little boy. But it had been honorable and intellectual work, and Dick was proud of his mother's bravery and ability.

"Don't you call me a liar!" shouted Parsons, making a threatening pose towards Young Wide Awake.

"You're not only a liar, but a lazy good-for-nothing! I know nothing about your mother, and if I did I would not bring her or any other woman's name into a street brawl. But I know the stock you're from on your father's side!"

"What do you mean, you rascal?" shouted Fred angrily.

The Neptunes gathered around their leader to see the excitement, and the Washingtons, equally interested and determined to see fair play, drew into the circle, too.

They were standing beneath a street lamp just at this time, and the light threw into prominence the two leaders of the opposing factions.

Dick Halstead did not lose by the comparison, with his stalwart, manly figure and his handsome face and gentlemanly bearing, which showed itself even in such a strained moment as now.

"I mean simply this," cried Wide in a clear, high-pitched voice that every fellow in the two companies could hear, "that your father is known as one of the dirtiest business men in Belmont. That he is hated and despised by every business associate. Where there is so much smoke there is fire. Some day some of the things said about him will be proved—then he'll get the prison bars. That's what I mean, Fred Parsons!"

"You sneaking cur!" cried Parsons.

"Well, I leave it to the fellows here what you must be with such a father—blood will tell!"

This was too much for such a hot-head as Parsons, and he rushed viciously towards Young Wide Awake.

But, true to his nickname, Dick could not be caught napping. He whirled around just a little, neatly dodged the intended blow as Parsons tore past him, and stood at guard as the enraged fellow stopped.

"If you want to mix it up here, I'm ready for you!" cried our hero.

"I'll mix you up!" yelled Parsons furiously, and again he rushed Wide, losing his head in his tempestuous anger.

This time he expected Wide to try the dodge again, and was prepared.

But Dick Halstead had more than one trick in his little kit of stunts, and instead of stepping aside as Fred expected he ducked his head with terrific force straight into the enraged Neptune's stomach.

Biff! What a blow that was—and what an unexpected effect, to Fred.

For he gasped and staggered back, throwing up his hands. He had been jabbed fair and square in the solar plexus and he swayed back and forth an instant, then fell back heavily, unconscious.

"I'll fix him, the smart Aleck!" cried Brick Houston, who was known as one of the best fighters in Belmont.

He did not rush into Dick as the unfortunate Parsons had done. Instead, he struck an attitude of defense and skillfully began the attack, advancing by quick, bewildering footwork.

Wide saw that he had a much more formidable antagonist now to cope with. But he was confident in his own prowess, and he began his campaign with certainty.

With a quick and unexpected jab he landed a blow on Brick Houston's left cheek, but the wily fellow knew the trick of ducking his head at the right instant, and the blow glanced off almost harmlessly.

"There!" cried Houston at that same instant, as he unexpectedly sent in a right straight-arm to Dick Halstead's face.

It was a furious, hammer-like blow, and it went straight home. Dick's nose was in the way, and Dick staggered back from the terrific jolt, for Brick was a hard hitter.

"First blood for Brick!" cried Gerald Keating exultantly as he saw the telltale red stream down Dick's face.

But this only warned our hero to be more careful next time.

Again he advanced, and for several minutes there was a brilliant sparring match between the two well-matched fellows. What Dick lacked in beef, as compared to Brick, he made up in agility—and that was saying a good deal, for Houston was quick as a cat himself.

At last it was evident that the strain was telling on Wide, for the heavier fellow rained a couple of blows on his face with staggering effect.

"You've got him going, Brick," cried Bob Fullerton; "keep it up!"

"Soak it to him, Brick!" cried his friends of the Neptunes as they gathered closer.

"Stand back, there!" cried Terry Rourke. "Give them a fair show!"

The crowd surged back a little and in the street lamp's glare the two fighters went at each other hammer and tongs.

"Keep your nerve, Dick!"

"Land him on the plexus! Good boy, Wide!"

"Good for you, Brick!"

A babel of cries went up from the ring of boys, as they stood around their respective champions.

They did not see the approach of a police officer, who peered over at them from the dark, and then remained in the background to watch the mill to a finish.

It was Connors, the assistant chief of police for Belmont. He knew the boys all well, and his sympathies were with Dick Halstead and his manly friends.

"I won't butt into this until they finish it up," he thought to himself. "I liked a good set-to myself when I was a young fellow!"

Meanwhile Fred Parsons had come to, and stood weakly against the lamp-post cheering on Brick Houston.

Suddenly Brick changed his tactics and rushed onto Wide, believing the young Washington to be weakened enough now for more offensive fighting.

"Gee, he's gone!" cried Terry as he saw a peculiar movement from Wide, who seemed to grasp Brick's hands, and then to suddenly fall over backwards.

"Hooray!" shouted the Neptunes, believing Dick to be defeated.

But they reckoned without their host, for they suddenly beheld Wide pull Brick Houston down towards him. With a quick movement Wide's foot shot up against the Neptune fighter's chest, as the young fire captain sank back against the ground.

Then, suddenly, as quick as the twinkling of an eye, Dick's leg straightened out with terrific force.

He held onto Brick's hands for an instant, and then, with

a jerk, the Neptune shot up into air over and over like a stone from a catapult.

Bump! Brick Houston came down to the ground with a thumping jar that racked every bone and sinew in his body.

"Oh! He's killed me!" he cried, and rolled over groaning.

The Neptunes rushed to him and picked him up. His shoulder had been dislocated and the fellow lay groaning loudly.

Connors now rushed into the circle, deeming it time to interfere before more rough work should take place.

"What are you boys doing?" he cried.

Gerald Keating pointed to Wide.

"That crook of a Dick Halstead has tried to kill Brick Houston!"

"Arrest him!" cried Fred Parsons, still doubling up over his bruised chest.

"Aw, run along, you boys! I've been watching this scrap—you fellows started this trouble, and I guess you're sore because one fellow licked two of you." Connors turned to Dick:

"Hurry on back to your engine-house, boys; this is no place to run a fight." It was plain to see that he was not angry at the Washingtons, and the boys followed his directions.

The Neptunes began to murmur angrily.

"If you fellows give me any of your back talk I'll run you all in for disorderly conduct. There's something mighty funny about this false alarm over here, and I'm going to find out about it."

He turned toward Brick Houston, who still lay groaning.

"What's the matter, boy?" asked the officer, not very unkindly.

"Oh, he's broken my back!" groaned Brick.

"Let's see. Oh, don't be a baby; your shoulder is just dislocated a little. Here, lend me a hand!"

George Anderson rushed over to help him, and in a while Connors had yanked the shoulder back into place, not without a series of bellows from Brick.

"Now you boys hoof it for your house before you get into more trouble."

The assistant chief did not have to give a second command, for the Neptunes had had adventures enough to last them for one evening, and they made a record run to their house.

CHAPTER V.

WIDE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

All this delay helped the dirty work of Bill Squiggins and his gang of crooks, who were hurrying on their way toward the Holmes Street fire-house when last we saw them.

"We must make a good job of dis, culls, an' den it means five more apiece fer us. Gee! Dere ain't nuttin' dishonest about dis job, 'cause we doesn't get none of de loot, an' we gits our honest wages from dat old Parsons guy!"

"It sure is a cinch, Bill," agreed Mike.

"How is de stuff to git into de joint?" asked Paddy, one of the silent partners.

"Easy, boy, easy as robbin' a baby. We jist walks into de back alley wit' our Christmas presents and does de Santy act up a ladder. And dere's a ladder waitin' fer us down dis little street."

It was easy to see that Bill was a born general, for he had every detail planned out to a nicety.

The ladder was soon found and the crooks had no trouble in making an entrance by the second story of the fire-house of the Washingtons. The window was open and they hustled up the canned goods, the candy, and the big bunch of fruit which they had also brought along for luck.

"Now let's put de dope back here under dese tarpaulins, in dis back room, bo; dis is a peachy place, and dey will not be found until after de news is around."

Bill Squiggins hurried his aides in their work, and in a short time all was ship-shape and the plunder was well concealed.

"Now us fer de long trail!" exclaimed the worthy leader of the thieves, and they hurriedly descended the ladder and took it away with them.

They were well out of the way when our friends returned from their long and fruitless chase across town.

The boys were tired as could be, and their party had been spoiled by the false alarm.

"Well, Dick," said Sam Bangs, "it was almost worth while to lose ten pounds in that long run just to see you lay it into Brick and Parsons."

"Maybe, but they laid it into me!" grunted Dick, for his nose was rather painful still from Brick's heavy blow. "I feel as if I had tried a butting match with a billygoat and lost out!"

He rubbed his face ruefully and applied some witch-hazel, which brought some relief.

The boys put up their apparatus as quickly as possible and then hurried back to the party to see the girls home, if it was not too late.

As good luck would have it, they were on time, and so they paired off as usual and bade good-by to the kind hostesses.

Dick went with Kitty, Joe Darrell with Anita Duroc, Hal with Amy Moulton, little Ted with Marjorie Kent, Terry Rourke with Faith Vane, and so on.

"Good-night! Good-night!" they called and started along.

"Dick, you've been in a fight, I'm sure. Your clothes

are torn and your face bruised. What was it?" asked the sympathetic Kitty.

"Oh, not at all," said Wide stoutly; "you're mistaken this time!"

"No, sir, young man, you can't fool me—I know it!" Kitty insisted.

Finally Dick admitted his guilt in the matter and told a tame version of the matter, leaving out all credit to himself.

But Kitty knew him, and she understood full well how much he must have played the part in such a double victory.

"Well, I don't like to have you be such a terribly fierce boy," said she affectionately, "and yet I'm mighty proud of the way in which you can defend yourself."

"Kitty, I don't believe in picking quarrels, and I don't hunt trouble. But when trouble is on my trail I stay right where I can be found, and in the long run the man who is willing to scrap for his rights and his own defense doesn't have to scrap nearly as much as the fellow who dodges around the corner all the time."

"Well, good-night," said Kitty with a sweet farewell kiss, and she ran up the steps without another word.

Wide walked down the driveway with sweet thoughts, and he went home to dream of the happy time when he could claim the beautiful girl as his own little bride.

"I know that Mr. Lester is with me," thought he to himself, "but I must wait awhile longer, for I don't believe in these silly kid marriages any more than he does."

The next day was Sunday, and the boys went down to the fire-house in the afternoon just to see that all was well.

Everything seemed quiet, and so the boys went back up to their homes and on to church.

Wide passed the day quietly with his mother, and in the evening dropped in for a short call on Kitty.

"Hello, boy!" said Mr. Lester. "I am glad to see you again. How did you get over that riot business? I haven't seen you since then."

"Oh, that is past history now, Mr. Lester," answered Wide; "we've had all sorts of wars since then."

"Tell me all about it," said the older man, who admired our young hero immensely, and lived over the exciting times of his own youth through Dick's eyes.

So Young Wide Awake related the adventures of the preceding night.

To the railroad man's quick mind there seemed something peculiar about the whole matter.

"I suspect some sort of treachery in that false alarm, Dick," said he. "Do you suppose they could have laid a trap for you in some way?"

"No, sir, I can't for the life of me see how they could have done so. They seemed just as pegged out as we did

after that long crosstown run. It was a queer way to get even with us, for it is no cinch to drag a heavy fire machine that far."

"You are right, Dick. If there was any game it must have been of Fred Parsons' planning, and the rest not in on the deal. I don't understand it at all."

Next morning bright and early Dick was down at the engine-house to look over things and see if by any possibility there had been any trickery with their apparatus while he had been fighting the two Neptunes.

"Nothing seems wrong," he muttered to himself. "I guess we must be over-suspicious."

He looked around the fire-house to see if everything was in order. As he looked out the back door he stopped, startled.

"Hello!" he said to himself. "I wonder who of the boys was using the ladder. There are two ladder marks in the dirt there, sure as fate."

His quick eyes had noticed the two depressions in the mud near the side of the house, and he bent over them.

"That's queer. That's a smaller ladder than any we have here. I wonder——"

He examined them very closely, looked up, and there was the open window of the second floor.

"I swear there's something queer about this. We have not a single ladder around here that's as narrow as this." He ran into the house and brought a fire-ladder out and stood it up against the house in the exact place.

He clambered up to the second floor to do a little observing, and as he reached the top of the ladder he muttered an exclamation of surprise.

There, on the window sill, lodged over in the little niche between the shutter and frame of the window, was a torn piece of brown cloth, lodged on a small bent nail in the woodwork.

"We've had visitors!" Dick sprang into the room through the window and searched in vain for some evidence of burglary.

"Nothing taken. I wonder what is the matter here? Am I crazy, or what is it?"

He scratched his head, but no ideas would come, and in disgust he started toward the window again.

He viciously kicked at the tarpaulins which were piled up there.

Biff! It was a hard kick, and the folded tarpaulins scattered a little:

"What's that?" and something white showed—it was the corner of a big white box.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Dick, amazed. "I never saw the likes of this before in this engine-house. We don't keep lunch-boxes in the store-room."

He quickly pulled off the folded tarpaulins, and beneath

them found the pile of plunder. There were boxes of candy, canned salmon and other dainties, preserve jars, a bunch of bananas, and other things.

"Who is giving us surprise parties?" wondered Wide. Then instantly he remembered the suspicions of Mr. Lester the night before.

"I'll 'phone him at once," he determined, and he hurried to the telephone.

"Hello! Is this Mr. Lester? No? Is it you, Kitty? Well, your father hasn't gone down to the office yet this morning, has he? No? Good! Yes, little girl, I'd like to speak to him. In a great big hurry."

"Hello!" came Mr. Lester's cheery voice. "That you, Dick? What's the trouble?"

"Mr. Lester, your hunch last night about the Neptunes was right, I think, and there's something queer turned up at the engine-house that I wish you would give me your advice about at once."

"My boy, I am always with you—what is it?"

"Well, I'd rather you would come down, for it is pretty important."

"All right, lad. I'll be down that way on my ride to the office."

"Good-by, then—I'm waiting," and Dick rang off.

In a few minutes Mr. Lester was with him, and Dick led him upstairs without a word.

"There," he said, pointing to the piled-up goods, "what do you think of that?"

"Why, I don't know what to think!" ejaculated the surprised railroad magnate. He went over to the goods to examine them closely.

"Look here, the name of the Milton Smith Company is on every bit of this. Where did it come from, Dick?"

"You know nearly as much as I do, Mr. Lester; but I'll tell you what I found out when I first came down," and Wide related the different clues he had found.

"Then there has been dirty work. Now let me see what to do," said the older man, thoughtfully scratching his chin.

"I have it—ring up Chief Pelton and get him down here as a witness at once and tell him what you have told me. He is the city official to whom you are responsible."

"All right, I'll call him at once," and Wide hurried to the 'phone.

"Hello! This Chief Pelton? Well, this is Dick Halstead, down on Holmes Street, and, chief, I wish you would get down here in double-quick time. It is very important."

"Sure, my boy. What is it—a still-alarm fire?"

"No, chief; it is just something that deals with the standing and honor of the Washington No. 1 Company, and I want you to help me."

"All right, lad. You are my best fire-fighter and I'd do anything in the world for you, so I'll be right down."

The chief jumped into a buckboard and was soon on the field.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lester—you down, too?" he said as he saw the railroad magnate.

"Yes, Chief Pelton. I advised Dick to send for you."

"Well, you both look mighty serious. What is the trouble? Who's having the funeral?" he laughed.

"We're afraid our company's honor will have a funeral," said Dick and he led the chief upstairs.

He pointed out the loot that had been hidden under the tarpaulins. He then showed the chief the circumstantial evidence about the narrow ladder and the shred of cloth in the window.

"What on earth do you make of it?" asked the chief in amazement.

"I'll tell what I think, chief, after deep study. I believe that some villainous person has stolen these goods and for some reason is trying to lay the blame at the door of this fire company. You notice that all these things are the sort of things that young fellows like to eat—well, to me it is evident that here is a deep-laid plot!"

"Well, I swan! Wouldn't that jar you!" uttered the chief.

"It certainly would," grunted Wide indignantly. "What had we better do, Mr. Lester, report it to the police?"

"No, Dick. That would queer the whole game. These things were hidden here carefully not for you to find, but for the officials of the law. Now it is plain to see that the police would never run into this property of their own volition. Therefore, I think that there will be some sort of information given them."

"Aha! Mr. Lester," said the chief, "I catch your drift. You're a pretty slick amateur detective!"

"Well, I've had enough experience rounding up railroad thieves in my time. But to continue with this case: I suggest that you make an official report of this matter, sign and seal it and deposit it with the police authorities to-day, to be opened only on your order. I will be another witness, of course. Meanwhile the plotter, whoever he may be—and I have my suspicion—will inform the police, and that way we will get track of him."

"That's a bully plan, Mr. Lester, and I'll do exactly as you direct."

"All right, chief. Now, meanwhile, Dick, you mustn't breathe a word about this whole matter to any one, for it's apt to leak out. Remember, my boy, and we'll land some one in jail for this. Mark my words—we'll square an old score or two, also, I think."

He winked at our hero, a large, big wink which had a world of meaning.

Dick winked back an equally intelligent and humorous wink.

The chief sat right down, prepared his report and sealed it up and hurried up to police headquarters to deposit it with Assistant Chief of Police Connors.

It was well he did, for already developments of the plot-
ters were well under way.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WASHINGTONS UNDER SUSPICION.

An hour or so after the chief had called on Connors a special delivery messenger from the post-office came in and laid a blue envelope on the desk of the assistant chief.

"Here's some official matter, I guess, Mr. Connors," he said, pulling out his little black receipt book. "I wish you'd please sign for it, as we always like to have these things go direct to headquarters with police letters."

"That's right, carrier, for it means a great deal to us. We have no fault to find with Uncle Sam's gray-uniformed messengers, though—the wonder is that they do their work so well and with so few mistakes!"

The assistant chief of police, in the absence of his chief, opened the letter, which was typewritten, both address and inside reading matter.

"Whew!" he whistled in amazement. "I wonder what on earth this can mean."

He read the letter two or three times in astonishment, and shook his head.

"I hope it isn't so. I hope it's a lie, for I like those boys an awful lot; but duty is duty. Here, sergeant, what do you think of this letter?"

The sergeant came over and read the missive in silence. It ran as follows:

"TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE, CITY OF BELMONT:

"Dear Sir—I wish to make known to you the fact that a certain robbery has been committed, and as I have secretly learned the facts of the case I hasten to put it before you. I know that quick action is necessary, and so send this special delivery. I urge equal speed on your part in catching the guilty parties. I will mention no names, but will merely give you the facts. Saturday night the wholesale grocery store of the Milton Smith Company was robbed—you can find out by investigation. You can also find the stolen goods somewhere hidden around the engine-house of the Washington No. 1 Company, on Holmes Street. That is all. Now, it is up to you!

"A FRIEND OF LAW AND ORDER."

"What do you think of it, sergeant?" asked Connors again.

"Oi think it's a lie!" exclaimed the officer addressed. "Thim byes is as clean a lot as Oi ever saw fightin' the flames. It's not fer the likes of thim to be riskin' their names fer some boom groceries."

"That's what I think, sergeant," answered Connors with a smile at the old sergeant's earnestness, "but duty is duty. We must look into it. This letter is anonymous, and is sent by a coward—still, we never can tell."

"Thot's right, sor; but justice will win out in the long run!"

"Well, I will run down to that engine-house with Officer Callahan, and I wish you would take a little trip to the Milton Smith Company, and learn if they have been robbed. 'Phone me at the Holmes Street engine-house in just fifteen minutes."

"All right, sor, but Oi hopes as how the fine young fellies will not be mixed up in such durrtty work!"

The sergeant and the assistant chief separated on their missions.

No one was in the engine-house, at first, but while the officer was knocking outside Hal Norton, the young lieutenant, came cheerfully along.

"Hello, Mr. Connors," he cried, "and the top of the morning to you, Officer Callahan!" he called to the jolly-faced Irish cop with him.

"Hello, Hal," said Connors, apologetically. "I've come down here on a little queer business, but it's my duty and I know you'll pardon it."

"Why, I don't understand you, Mr. Connors," answered Hal.

"Well, I must ask you to let me search this house from top to bottom for some stolen goods that have been said to be in your house here!"

Hal flushed to the roots of his hair.

"For goodness' sake," he began indignantly, "you surely don't think——"

"I surely don't think a thing, my boy," said the official with a laugh; "I am only going through a form that is my duty. I'll explain it to you later."

"Oh," said Hal, "you're perfectly welcome to make yourself at home," and he threw open the door.

"Go upstairs, Callahan," said the assistant chief; "I'm lazy and will snoop around down here."

The officer did as he was bid and Connors casually walked around the ground floor, looking into corners and nooks with half interest.

"Great Scott!" came down from upstairs. "Come here, sir!" Callahan's voice showed that he was very excited.

"What on earth can he mean?" cried Hal, alarmed by he knew not what.

With Connors he rushed up the steps two at a time, and there to his dismay he beheld the pile of plunder which the

officer had uncovered. Wide, at Mr. Lester's instructions, had replaced the tarpaulins just as he had found them, and then gone on downtown with the railroad man to let things take their course.

"This looks serious, my boy!" said the surprised and almost doubting Connors. "Where did this come from?"

"I don't know! I swear I never saw it before!"

Just then the telephone bell rang and Callahan ran down to answer it for Connors. It was the sergeant.

Callahan returned with an anxious face.

"Mr. Connors, sir, the sergeant says that the Milton Smith Company was certainly robbed last Saturday or yesterday, Sunday, for their cellar was broke into!"

"Oh, but this is bad business!" said Connors. "Where is Dick Halstead?"

Hal was just about in a frenzy. He saw in his mind's eye the picture of them all doing the lock-step together down the hard stone pavements of the State penitentiary!

"Jumping wildcats!" he exclaimed. "I don't understand this at all."

He hurried to the telephone and tried to reach Wide over the wire. But the young captain was nowhere to be found. Just as he hung up the receiver in despair who should walk in the door but Dick and Mr. Lester.

"Great Scott, Dick! There's the very dickens to pay!" he cried in agonized tones. "Do you know that we are blamed with a lot of stolen goods which were found upstairs?"

"Is that so?" asked Wide with exasperating calmness. "Who said so?"

"I do, Dick," said Connors, coming down the stairs. "I'm sorry to do it, too, my boy, but there is some bad evidence here, and you boys must answer to a charge of suspicion."

"Just what is the trouble, Mr. Connors?" asked Lester, who was deeply interested, as you can guess.

Connors showed Mr. Lester the anonymous letter signed "A Friend of Law and Order." The name made a great hit with Mr. Lester.

"Ha! ha! ha! That is the best yet," and both he and Wide laughed until their sides ached.

"What do you mean? Don't you know that this is a grave charge, with circumstantial evidence of the hardest sort?" asked Connors. "I hate to do it, but I must place Dick Halstead under arrest as captain of the Washington Fire Company."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Mr. Lester, "that's all right, Connors, you just go ahead and do your duty. Ha! ha! I'll bail him out, all right. 'Friend of Law and Order'—that's the funniest thing I've seen yet, eh, Dick?"

Hal watched the two in growing amazement and disgust.

"Dick, I think you're crazy!" he said. "Your name is under a cloud and that of every one of us fellows here is the same. It's no laughing matter."

"Let's go down to headquarters, Mr. Connors, and Mr. Lester will sign my bond," was all Dick would say to the astonished trio, Hal, Callahan and Connors.

"All right, Dick. I don't understand, but I suppose there's something back of this, all right," said he in a puzzled way.

"Yes, there is, Mr. Connors," replied Lester, "but it will all be straightened out. Meanwhile, you go through the regular formula of your duty."

So Dick was arraigned before the assistant chief and charged with being suspected of burglary, and his name was entered on the blotter.

"His bond is three hundred dollars," said a magistrate who was summoned, writing out the details.

"All right, I'm ready to sign it for many thousands," said the railroad magnate with a smile as he put his name to the paper.

"Now we'll watch developments." And they went up to his house for lunch. "I'm giving up a good deal of valuable business time, Dick, for this matter, because I like you and I dislike some one else so. I think I'll get my money's worth in both ways."

By a strange coincidence Gerald Keating happened down to police headquarters on some sort of errand—looking for some reporter or other. Casually, too, he looked over the police blotter of the day, after asking permission.

"Well," he cried with well-simulated astonishment, "look at this!"

He glued his eyes to the record and drank in every detail with apparent and ill-concealed joy.

Then he rushed forth to tell the news to everybody he met. Meanwhile the older Parsons, who owned stock in the Milton Smith Company, which was a large corporation, had "heard" of the robbery and insisted on the immediate prosecution of the suspected parties.

"I'll land those thieves behind the bars," he declared loudly to the officers of the company, "and I want your co-operation." They gave it grudgingly, for the Washingtons had made themselves popular with the grocery company by past services.

However, they put the matter in Parsons' hands. He announced that he would spare no expense in punishing Wide, who he announced was undoubtedly the dangerous leader of a dangerous gang of thieves who had been demoralizing the neighborhood for weeks.

Fred Parsons hunted up the chief of the department immediately that afternoon.

"Chief Pelton, now that Dick Halstead is under suspicion and only out on bail, I come here formally in behalf

of the Neptunes to protest against his remaining in a position as captain of a Belmont fire company!"

The chief fixed a clear, keen eye on Parsons and said in a cutting voice:

"Young man, you take your doll rags and go home. I'm running this department, and you can't teach me any tricks till you're many years older. If a little suspicion was enough to disqualify fire-fighters in this town I know one particular company that would have only one fellow pulling the old machine! Think it over!"

Fred Parsons whirled on his heel with a flaming face and left for the Neptunes' engine-house.

"The chief suspects something, I'm afraid," said he to Gerald Keating, who met him. "But I'll bet we've covered our tracks pretty well."

However, Fred Parsons, like many other clever and unscrupulous persons, overlooked just one little detail—a simple little thing, but one which later on queered his little game not a little.

Meanwhile the Washingtons were very much upset over the suspicion which the Neptunes had carefully circulated around town, but Dick reassured them.

"Boys, I can't tell you a thing about it now, but we will fix it all up soon and come out with colors flying in the breeze. So I want to have you trust me implicitly and just laugh when any one says anything about it. That will make people know that it is not serious."

They followed his advice and people were mystified as he had predicted. The case was set for trial before the magistrate for the following Monday, while the bail-bond was approved, and Wide was not bothered any more.

That evening there was a sudden still alarm, and the Washingtons came tearing into the house to learn the cause.

"Give me Dick Halstead," called Chief Pelton over the 'phone.

Wide responded at once, and the chief said:

"Dick, there's a dreadful fire down the country a ways. The insane asylum is afire and the wells and water-tanks have gone to the bad. The only hope is two fire companies from Belmont. Will your fellows go?"

"You bet your life we will!" yelled Wide over the 'phone in his eagerness, so loudly that the chief's ear buzzed for five minutes afterward.

"Well, lad, it will be a ticklish job. It's a long run down a country road, and so you must decide for yourselves."

"What is it, Wide?" yelled the gallant young Washingtons as he turned towards them, holding the receiver to his ear.

"Are you boys ready to go to fight a fire in an insane asylum down the road?" he asked, holding the transmitter of the 'phone towards them.

"Yes!" they roared with one voice, so loudly that the chief heard them, too.

"All right, Wide—I heard them!" he called over the 'phone. "You know the place, down the lower road, past Wiggins' Corners, and up the hill. Good luck! I'll see you later down there!"

He rang off, and the boys hurried, for they knew that desperate work was ahead of them.

"Every fellow to his position!" cried the young captain.

"Ready, now, everybody! Careful and steady, boys—save your wind," directed Young Wide Awake. "We'll all stick together, for I know we are going to have the queerest night's work before us that we've ever had yet!"

"Let 'er go, Gallagher!" yelled Tommy Grogan, eager for the start.

"All right—we're off!" and down the street, with steady paces, the Washingtons started on their long run.

Many difficulties they met and overcame in that long run.

It seemed hours to the panting boys, but it was really a record run, and they reached the foot of the lane going into the asylum grounds at least ten minutes before the Neptunes.

Up the hilly lane they dragged, almost exhausted, but Young Wide Awake would not let them lag.

"Now, boys, work as you never did before! We've reached the battlefield and now begins the fight against the flames."

"It's time we got here, Dick," said Joe Darrell. "Just look at that wing there. It is a mass of flame!"

To their right one part of the asylum group was completely afire, but as good luck would have it, the building was that containing the dining-room, kitchens, store-rooms, and so forth.

Indeed, the fire had started in this structure, from some defective range, or other cause, and had spread by the time the Washingtons reached the scene to the other buildings which housed the unfortunate maniacs and half-witted persons.

"Isn't that terrible, to be caught in such a way, without the sense to escape?" asked Harry Phelps of Sam Bangs.

"Say, Harry, it ain't no cinch to be nutty any time, if you want my honest opinion," said the fat boy as he tugged away at the long hose sections.

"Hurry, boys! Hurry! Not a second to lose—the other wings have caught from the sparks!" yelled Young Wide Awake through his trumpet.

Those high-spirited boys did hurry, for up the road they could hear the shouts and bells of the Neptunes coming to the fire.

"We must beat them to it!" cried Hal Norton, and the young lieutenant sprang to man the machine.

"The hose is coupled and the nozzle on!" screeched

Tommy to Wide, who was up close to the burning structure, looking for the best place to begin.

"Let 'er go with the juice!" shouted Young Wide Awake in bellowing tones, and the water spurted forth in a beautiful arch, showing that Sam and Harry had found a fine well after all.

"Now to the rescue!" yelled Young Wide Awake, grabbing up a fire-axe and rushing into the building, followed by Terry Rourke.

CHAPTER VII.

A BATTLE IN THE FLAMES.

Right into the blazing hallway of the asylum plunged Young Wide Awake with his usual fearlessness.

The daredevil Irish lad, Terry Rourke, was close upon his heels carrying a couple of hand-grenades, and it was well that he did.

"This hallway leads to the upper floor, Terry, don't you think so?" asked Wide.

"Shure, and Oi don't know the diff, Dick, but Oi do know thot 'tis powerful close wid smoke, and Oi think thot some av 'thim poor loonies are doubtless locked up in their cells and burning to death!"

"I believe you are right, Terry," cried Dick. "It is a bad thing at a fire to open doors when you don't have to, but to save these poor peoples' lives we will have to take a risk."

With the word he sprang toward the nearest door. It was big and ponderous, and seemed to be heavily locked.

The flames down the hallway crackled and smoked, but above the noise Wide thought he distinguished screams from the locked room.

"It doesn't open!" he cried as he shook and shook the door.

"Well, there's another key for every door," and with the word he swung his keen-bladed fire-axe into the heavy oaken woodwork.

Chop! chop! chop! How the splinters and chips flew beneath the quick strokes of his skillful work.

Bang! The lock was loosened and the door swung on its hinges. A chorus of screams—fearful, agonized screams, rang out from inside the locked-up room, and Wide jumped back just in time.

A wild crowd of disheveled, maniacal women rushed out of the loosened door with wild cries, half dressed, and with streaming hair.

"Begorrah, and will you watch the poor divvells!" said Terry sympathetically as he watched the poor demented women flee down the long hallway to the doorway.

"Isn't it terrible to think of their being left caged that

way like rats in a trap? I guess the nurses and doctors are safe, all right," said Dick Halstead.

"The byes ought to be along wid the hose inside the building, Oi think," said Terry.

"They are fighting their way along the outside, Terry, but they'll be in here in a minute."

Dick ran toward the door and saw to his satisfaction that the Washingtons had two nozzles playing on the fire.

"Hurry up—this way, Washingtons!" cried the young captain in a clear voice. "We must clear this hallway of the flames and then get upstairs."

By now the lower end of the passage was a raging furnace, for the dry woodwork of the ramshackle old asylum burned like so much tinder.

"Charge with the water!" shrieked Hal Norton, manning one of the nozzles.

The two crews charged towards the flame, and swish! how they crackled and roared and hissed as their enemy the water struck them!

"Right into that worst place, Hal!" directed the young captain.

"All right, Wide—there she goes!" and the water was directed into the whirlpool of red tongues of fire.

Soon a black spot appeared, and it was evident that the conquest of the fiery element had been begun.

"It is clearing away," cried Hal, and he changed the direction of the hose stream.

"Good work!" yelled Dick, taking a hand at the other nozzle himself. "Now we've nearly got this part of the hall out!"

This was indeed true, and the passageway was cleared.

"We must go upstairs soon, but be careful of those charred stairways, boys!" cried Young Wide Awake.

"Ye can't hould us back!" yelled the Irish boy, with a grenade in either hand and an axe under his arm, as he charged up the stairs.

"Follow on, lads!" and the brave young captain took up the stern chase after the daring Terry.

Up the stairs they ran, and my, how they wobbled! The woodwork had been dangerously scorched and charred, and yet was not burned through.

"Look out, Terry!" cried the leader, as he saw the wooden steps shake ominously beneath the eager tread of the Irish youth.

Terry tried to stop, hesitated, but it was too late.

Crash! Bang! and the rotten, burned wood caved in with him. Down he went through the deceptive flooring of the stairs and landed up with a bump on the floor beneath.

"Are you hurt, old boy?" asked Wide, leaning over the banisters to see.

"Wow!" yelled Terry lustily, in a voice which showed plainly that his lungs had not been injured.

He had dropped perhaps ten feet, with considerable force, but it fortunately did not injure him, and he picked himself up, only jarred.

"Oi am not! But such a boomp!" and he ran around and started up the stairway again.

"I beat you by a lap!" laughed Wide as he cautiously picked his way up the rickety woodwork.

When Terry fell through quite a good deal of the steps had gone with him, and Dick beheld to his consternation that the passageway was almost impassable.

"Well, I've gone through worse places than that," said the young fighter to himself, and suiting the action to the word he reached over to the wobbly banister and worked his way up along the edge.

The inner portion of the steps had caved in, but the railing part was still standing, and Wide carefully balanced himself as he clambered up this rickety sort of a Jacob's ladder.

It was no paradise that the ladder led to, however, for up in the second story hallway the flames had gained a good headway.

"Come on, Terry, and be more careful this time," shouted Wide loudly, so as to be heard above the noise.

Terry followed close upon his heels, but this time he did not fall through to the landing below.

Meanwhile the Washingtons had about cleared out the fire in the lower part of the corridor and were dragging their hose up towards the stairway to get new worlds to conquer.

"This way, lads!" and Wide leaned over to wave to his friends. As he did so the railing creaked and the young captain saw that he had better not linger long in such a precarious position.

"We'll follow you, Wide," cried Hal, who was tugging away and bringing his hose toward the foot of the stairway.

Terry had now caught up with Wide, and the two stood on the second floor.

"Gee! Look at that!" cried the Irish youth, and pointed down the stairway.

The woodwork shivered a moment and then, with a long crash, caved in completely, banisters and all.

"Well, it's lucky that we got here when we did, but our retreat is almost cut off," said Wide.

Hal saw the disaster, and was for an instant perplexed as to the next move, for they must get up those stairs and had no time to run back for ladders.

"Quick, Sam!" he cried, with a sudden idea. "Unreel that rope hanging over there and toss it to Wide!"

The fat Washington youth obeyed with alacrity. The rope was tossed up to Wide.

The first two tries failed, but at the third effort it was

caught by Dick, and he ran over to the wall and looped it around the joist of the heavy protruding woodwork.

"Now, hook the nozzle on, and I'll pull it up!" he yelled.

This was quickly done, and the hose was yanked up, with the water turned off for an instant.

"Hand over hand, boys," shouted Wide; "show your muscles!"

The two youths at the top grabbed the nozzle and directed the water on the near-by flames, while the Washingtons swarmed up the rope one after the other.

"Good work!" yelled Hal as he watched even fat Sam Bangs pull himself up stoutly and clamber over onto the second floor.

"It takes more than a bum stairway to hold me back!" said the fat boy, panting.

"Now, boys, clear out this end of the hallway, while Terry and I look up these different rooms—there may be many a poor soul imprisoned here!"

"I'll take charge," said Hal. "Go on ahead, Dick."

The young captain and his Irish friend attacked the nearest doorway briskly with their axes.

Biff! Bang! Crash! It tottered in, and their work was rewarded by the screams of the inmates, more half-naked women, with their long hair down, shrieking with fright.

"This way, ladies, this way!" yelled Joe Darrell, and it was all the Washington boys could do to keep the frightened hysterical inmates from leaping headlong over the railing to the floor below.

The stairway was completely cut off.

"Let them down one at a time on the rope, boys—I'm going up the hall further," ordered Wide.

Joe Darrell slid down the rope and stood at the bottom to catch the frightened weak-minded women.

Sam Bangs stood at the top, and his goodly weight came in very handy in helping the women over the railing one at a time.

"Slow—slow—slow!" cautioned Sam, and in turn he wrapped the rope around their bodies, under the arms, and lowered them to Joe's strong arms.

Joe carefully landed each one of them, and pointed out the exit to safety at the far end of the hall, for the lower floor was practically all out by this time.

"Help! help!" screamed a voice inside another door.

"We're coming! Don't be frightened!" answered Wide valorously. Again the sharp axes rang out and the door soon gave before their fierce attack.

"This is a tougher proposition than the other, Terry," said Wide, for they found that part of the ceiling had caved in, barricading the entrance from the inside.

"We can fix that all right," grunted Terry, and they went with ferocity at the pile of plaster, laths and beams.

Gradually, and yet with rapidity, they chopped and dug

their way through and forced the door further and further open.

Inside the room they saw a beautiful girl, standing as near the door as possible, wringing her hands and weeping with fear.

"Begorrah," said Terry, "what a peach!"

She was indeed a pretty picture, as she stood there in the red firelight from the burning walls.

Her dark curly hair streamed over her shoulders, framing her beautiful white face, and making its fairness the more noticeable.

"I wonder if she can be crazy, too? What a pity!" thought Wide as he plugged away at the debris before the door.

"Now, it's open at last! We'll get you out all right, miss!" he shouted.

The girl stopped her weeping and tried to advance in her bare feet over the broken plaster and smoldering sparks.

"Oh," she cried, "it hurts so I can't! My shoes are under that fallen part of the ceiling with the rest of my clothes!"

"If you'll permit me, I'll lift you over," said Wide, springing into the room through the half-opened door.

The girl flushed despite her fright, and she looked even prettier than before.

"It's no time for false modesty!" cried Young Wide Awake. Even as he spoke the ceiling began to rumble, and he saw that the remainder was about to cave in.

"Quick! Quick!" yelled Terry, seeing the danger.

Wide sprang towards the beautiful girl and picked her up in his strong arms like a feather, for she was rather small and daintily built.

He leaped toward the doorway just in time.

With a crash the floor above completely caved in, letting down a veritable shower of sparks.

"Oh!" screamed the terrified girl, but the brave young captain had carried her to safety in the outside hallway.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" she cried. "I can get out now down the stairs!"

"No, you can't," said Wide, pointing to the fallen steps, "but we can lower you down with this rope and then the way is clear!"

"All right," said the girl. "I am a nurse here, and had gone to bed early, being on duty all last night. Thank you so much."

She turned toward the rope arrangement, and Wide saw that she was so thinly clothed that she would almost freeze in the night air outside.

He had his jacket on all this time, hurriedly neglecting to take it off and leave it in the wagon, as was his usual habit.

"Here, miss, put this around you, and you can hand it to me later."

He whipped off the garment and wrapped it around the girl's slender shoulders. Without another second's delay he lowered her to Joe, who sent her outside to safety.

Terry looked at Wide. "Say, Kitty had better be jealous, Dick!" he said laughingly.

"Oh, I guess there's no danger," said Dick, "but there would have been if Kitty hadn't seen me first!"

Then he raced down the hallway to force open more doors and liberate more of the inmates who had all been locked in for the night.

In the course of a very few minutes the boys had cleared out that corridor of all the unfortunates and one or two nurses, but they could not control the flames on this floor.

They had gained too much headway. So they were forced to retreat down the stairs and out into the open air again.

CHAPTER VIII.

WIDE'S DESPERATE CHANCE.

All this time the Neptunes had been doing good work at another wing of the building, and had saved a number of the more harmless patients.

"Where is the captain of the company?" cried a middle-aged man, running up to the Washingtons, who now gathered around the front of the main building to begin the fight anew.

"Here he is, sir!" answered Dick Halstead, coming over to the excited gentleman. "What can I do for you?" he continued.

"Well, captain, I want to ask you to do a dangerous thing. On the upper floors of that middle building are the dangerous wards. There the raving maniacs are quartered."

"All right, do you want them saved?"

"Yes, I am the head surgeon of this asylum, and I feel it my duty to humanity to look after these poor unfortunates who have been entrusted to my care. So I cannot see them burned to death."

"I don't blame you, sir," said Dick. "Direct me to the exact ward, and I'll get them out if it costs me my life!"

"I will go with you, young man. You are a brave and worthy fellow," said the physician. "I would not ask any one to do what I feared myself. But these maniacs are dangerous and are apt to fight their best friends with murderous intent."

"I've fought sane people, doctor, and won out—and they were pretty mean!" said Dick with a laugh.

"Well, over this way then, and into this door. Here is the key."

"Can't wait to unlock it, doctor," and Dick Halstead flashed his axe and demolished the door in a jiffy.

The floor was already on fire, for heavy volumes of smoke poured out upon them.

"Four yards to the right in this hallway is the stairway," directed the doctor, "and I will go up with you. The maniac ward is on the next floor and the poor fellows are all barred in, so there is no escape for them through the windows."

"Doctor, you stay out here and help from the outside," said Wide. "You are not used to fighting smoke and fire and would be overcome. I will go inside with Terry."

The physician hesitated, and as he did so the two youths darted inside the doorway, after first wrapping their wet handkerchiefs about their mouths to keep the smoke out.

"This way, boys, with the hose!" yelled Hal, who took command of the company in Dick's absence inside.

The Neptunes were attending to the flames on the other wing, so the Washingtons came on the run for the front entrance.

Inside Dick and Terry were having a hard time of it.

The smoke was blinding and choking, and they could only feel their way along. But Wide and his Irish friend clung to each other's hands and so kept close together.

"Four yards to the right," thought Wide, remembering the doctor's directions. He felt along the wall, but there was no stairway in that direction. "Great Scott! He's balled up and doesn't know his own directions!"

Then his quick wit came to the rescue.

"Ah, the old fellow was twisted and counted it to the right, from the inside, instead of the outside!" He guessed right this time, and the two brave youths, coughing and choking despite themselves, hurried along in the opposite direction.

They found the stairs, when, what was their horror to behold the whole row of steps a mass of flame!

"Oi have thim fixed!" cried Terry, who had been lugging around his two grenades all this time, despite his active work, too.

Bang! He threw one of the grenades at the lower part of the burning stairway, and the chemicals did their work there.

The flames died down apace. Bang! The other was sent by his unerring hand to the upper part of the stairs and that part was quenched for the minute.

"Quick, now!" cried Young Wide Awake, seeing the roaring flames on the side. "The whole lower hallway is a blast furnace, Terry. Up with you!"

The two youths, axes in hand, rushed to the top of the stairs, and Terry smashed open two large French windows that opened out on a portico. That cleared the air a little, and the boys looked around.

They beheld, by the red light of the hall, a long passage-way. Two heavily-braced doors opened off it, one on each side.

"You take one and I'll take the other, Terry!" yelled

Wide, and the young captain turned to the door on the left, facing, as it happened the front part of the building.

It was the ward-room of the men maniacs.

Terry went to work with his keen tool on the heavy-paneled door on the right. This was the ward-room of the women maniacs.

Biff! Biff! Bang! Rip! The Irish boy chopped furiously away at the wooden door, and with a deft blow of his axe-back he broke the lock on the outside loose.

He heard a terrific screaming on the inside, and as he forced the lock aside by prying with his blade he kicked the door with his heavy boot, and pushing with his shoulder, swung it open slowly.

"Wow!" such a bunch of screeches he had never heard in his life.

A scrawny, thin woman in a flowing gown leaped right at his head, and the poor fellow toppled back on the floor from the vicious assault.

But the open window showed right before the maniac and she sprang to the window and rushed out on the portico roof, screeching.

A score or more of the maniacs followed her from the room, all women, scantily dressed, and they rushed out on the portico roof.

Terry rolled aside in the corner with an aching head from his heavy and unexpected fall. This move saved him from the rush of the wild females, and he let them all pass.

The Neptunes were nearest this portico, and led by George Anderson, who manned a long ladder, they did some very creditable rescue work with the frenzied women lunatics.

Brick Houston and Gerald Keating got "done up" by the first and most violent maniac, right there on the front lawn of the asylum.

Young Wide Awake had sallied forth against the stout oaken door of the men's maniac ward.

Crash! Bang! Boom! The door yielded to his strong work, and he forced it open.

No maniacs rushed him as they did Terry, because they were all clustered around the front window of this long, high-roofed room.

It was barred, but the lunatics had realized even in their aberrant state of mind that the fire meant death. Crazy people have just as much fear of death's mystery as sane. So they fought like animals to get to the window.

"Gee! But this is the most blood-curdling sight I ever saw," thought Dick Halstead to himself as he gazed in horror at the scene.

The crazy men were tearing each other's hair and beating each other cruelly in the faces and breasts with their clenched fists. Instead of working together they nearly all fought insanely.

One or two, however, had sense enough to press their en-

ergies into service. One great hulk of a man had brought a heavy oak bench to the window, and despite the struggles of his fellows he and the other lunatics had wit enough to swing back and pry with their great beam as it were.

Rip! rip! went the door and iron as the men swung their weight against it. Wide rushed forward to help them, and he leaped up into the window frame, after edging around sideways.

Just as Wide reached the window the lunatics succeeded in breaking out the bars. They made a mad effort to get out, nearly throwing him to the ground.

He clung to the casing for his life and yelled for help.

It was indeed a forlorn hope, for the maniacs beat at his face with frightful blows, and the boy captain of the Washingtons held on for all he was worth, blocking the window. He knew the maniacs would leap, and that would mean certain death from that high distance.

His shoulder muscles strained, and he felt his strength failing him.

"Help! Help! Hal—where are you?" he cried.

The boys rushed up towards him, and a ladder was run up to his aid. But Wide realized that the clamorous bunch of fighting lunatics would force both him and the ladder man down to their death!

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEPTUNES PLAY A SCURVY TRICK.

Wide was just about to give up hope, with the pressure of the lunatics increasing against his body and arms.

The ladder did not reach clear up to the sill, which was far above ground. Hal was running up the rungs, trying to reach Dick, but he was about three feet too shy.

"I am lost!" thought our hero in despair. "I must risk a leap even at this fearful height!"

But just at this instant a new factor took a hand in the game.

It was the gallant Irish lad, who had picked himself up in the corridor and rushed into the open door of the men's ward.

"Will yez look at thot!" he muttered to himself. "They're killing the poor boy!" and he rushed to the window to his captain's aid.

Biff! Bang! Terry Rourke brought down the heavy axe-handle on the heads of the crowding, fighting lunatics, and worked his way towards the window.

"Back! back! ye spalpeens!" he yelled, "or I'll bate ivery mother's son of yez, ye crazy goats!"

He shoved and pushed, and by terrible work pulled some of the excited men away from the window.

"Thanks, Terry, old boy!" cried Wide, plucking up fresh

courage as he got a fresh and stronger grip on the wide window jamb.

"Back! back! ye loonies!" yelled Terry, swatting right and left with his painfully hard weapon, and the lunatics backed away in sudden fear, for this new attacker had taken them unawares.

"Now, hold them off, and let only one at a time up," cried Wide. "Boys, lift up that ladder below so that Hal can get into this window."

This was rapidly done, and Hal clambered up, catching hold of Dick's legs and propping himself for a minute. Then he raised himself up again, and was standing by our young hero's side.

"I'll jump in and help Terry stave them off, Dick!" cried Hal, and he wiggled through onto the floor with the Irish lad.

"Good work, boys! Now, Joe, you come up and help steady these lunatics as we lower them to the top rung of the ladder!"

Wide's direction was obeyed, and in a few minutes the whole crowd of lunatics had been lowered one at a time to the top of the ladder, with Dick's helping hand above and Joe, braced against the wall, to help them down.

The poor unfortunates partly realized that the boys were doing their best to save them, and after the first show of force they were completely cowed.

The physician came rushing up, and as each poor fellow reached the ground patted him on the shoulder and reassured him. The doctor was one who ruled by kindness rather than force whenever possible.

Accordingly, he did not have much trouble in controlling the men, who, from their first unmanageable state, had now relaxed into submission, most of them weeping like little children.

The boys fought the flames valiantly, and in the course of a few more minutes had them under control.

"Hello, Dick!" came a sturdy voice from behind our hero as he stood directing the hose play. It was the chief, Pelton.

"Hello, chief!" answered Dick. "We thought you had been stolen."

"Well, my horse broke a leg, and I had an awful time. The poor animal had to be shot. That's what caused my delay. You have certainly been doing good work, I see. Any lives lost?"

"Not so far as we know, and we have cleared out nearly all the wards and nurse headquarters," said Dick.

"Well, let's all get together and fight that part of the fire in the middle. I'll order the Neptunes to come around and help."

The chief called over Fred Parsons.

"I want both of your companies to set to work like Trojans now on that blaze there in the middle wing. The fire

is all out except that part of it, and we must finish this job and get back to Belmont."

"All right," said Fred, with a scowl at Dick,

"We'll have it out in two shakes of a lamb's tail!" said Dick cheerfully, for he knew his own boys and he felt that they could all take care of themselves, even with any Neptune tricks.

"I think we'll have some trouble with that bunch, as they are sore about our saving so many people," said Joe Darrell to Sam Bangs.

"Well, let 'em get sore. We can improve on the job if they get gay," answered Sam, as he tugged away to get a hose into the entry of the burning building.

"Now, boys, direct your stream at this part over here," said Dick, pointing out a dangerous mass of flames.

"See here, Dick Halstead!" yelled Fred Parsons malignantly, "you keep out of this hallway with your bum bunch of would-bes! We've finished our work on the other wing and we'll do this. The chief told us to. You cowardly curs can't do a thing!"

"Better keep still, Parsons, or you'll get another licking like that last one I gave you!" warned Young Wide Awake, angered at such bitter action in a time like this.

"You took a dirty advantage of me," cried Fred, "but I'll get even, you thief! You grocery robber——"

Gurgle-lee! He never finished the sentence, for his face was struck with the stream of water from the hose in the hands of Hal.

The force of it threw young Parsons over backwards, and he scrambled to his feet, raging.

The Washington boys snickered loudly, and Hal turned the stream on the fire. Fred rushed over to him, scowling and dripping.

"What do you mean by that low-down trick?" he demanded angrily.

"Oh, my goodness! I beg your pardon, Parsons—it was purely an accident, I assure you!" said Hal with exasperating politeness. "You know accidents will happen in the best regulated of fires—you know it happened the other night at the riot just after we helped you fellows."

Fred saw that he was beaten at his own game.

"I'll see you crooks behind the bars yet! Wait until that case comes up for trial in the court next Monday! That's all—just you wait!"

He ran over to the ranks of his own company, and without any more words they all bent their energies to putting out the stubborn blaze.

The flames had started up afresh, with the little interruption to the fight, but now both companies succeeded in clearing out the hallway and flooded cellarway.

A few little smoldering places were noticed in the half crumbled wall, and Dick advanced to pull the debris out so that the water would reach them.

As he stooped over to pull with his fire-axe, he did not notice that the stream from a Neptune nozzle was played upon the pile of bricks on the wall above.

"Look out, Wide!" yelled Hal warningly, for his keen glance had taken it in.

Wide leaped, and just in time, for a dozen loosened bricks, sent flying by the stream of water, tumbled down upon him.

If it had not been for his agility in dodging the bricks would doubtless have fractured his skull.

Bump! Bump! The bricks struck the ground, except one, which grazed his shoulder-blade an unpleasant biff.

Dick whirled around quickly and saw the cause of the trouble.

It was Gerald Keating's aim with the Neptune nozzle. Gerald swung the stream around, but Wide had seen the trick.

"You fellows seem treacherous even in time of fire, when you should forget petty feelings!" cried our young hero with righteous indignation.

"What do you mean, fellow?" answered Keating impudently. "Accidents will happen."

"They will, will they?" demanded Wide, striding over to him boldly. "There's another accident—you'd better get old man Parsons to insure you!"

And before the Neptune divined his purpose, Wide's hard clenched fist had caught him an uppercut on the mouth which swung him back with a bump against the wall.

"If there are any more of these 'accident' jokers in this crowd let them step forward and the Washingtons will just 'tend to them!" yelled Hal.

But things were going amiss with the Neptunes, and they hurried outside to join the rest of their company.

Bitter looks were exchanged between the rival firemen, but the fire was out, the signal was given and Chief Pelton came up.

"Back to Belmont, boys, and none of this scrapping, or I'll lay off both companies."

The Washingtons and Neptunes both quietly put back their hose and fire tools and started the long run back to town.

Just as they were going down the drive the physician came up.

"Young man," said he, extending his hand to Wide. "I want to thank you and all your noble-hearted friends for this splendid work. I had no idea that volunteers were so daring and yet skillful. If it hadn't been for your brave work many a poor unfortunate would have met a horrible death. I thank you in the name of medicine and charity."

"We are only too glad to be of aid, sir," said Wide. "We do the best we can everywhere; and as for volunteers, you'll find that they are willing to sacrifice their lives much quicker than regulars in any sort of fighting. Look at the

Civil War, when men gave up riches and comfort to volunteer for thirteen dollars a month—and death free—to fight for their country.”

“My boy, you are right. I will hunt you up when I get time to run to Belmont. And I want you to come down here to dine with me, all of you, some time, when we rebuild the burned parts of the buildings. You will see that the food is good.”

“I hope you will come,” said the pretty little nurse over his shoulder. She had dressed in one of the older girls’ clothes and came to bring Wide his jacket.

“I thank you very much for your kind help,” she said, “and I, too, hope to see you again.”

“Well, good-night, everybody!” called Wide, after thanking her, and the Washingtons started out after this short delay.

The lunatics had been sheltered in a near-by farmhouse, and all was well at the asylum, so the boys had free minds and felt proud of their night’s work.

“Faith, Dick, an’ Oi’ll have to tell your Kitty mavourneen about the pretty nurse. Shure, and she’ll be jealous for six months!” and Terry laughed all the way home.

CHAPTER X.

THE GIRLS IN A RUNAWAY.

Bright and early the next morning the boys were out in front of the Holmes Street engine-house cleaning up their apparatus.

“That country road nearly put the machine to the bad,” said Hal as he toiled away.

“That and it did, shure,” said Terry. “Faith, but Oi don’t think we were intinded for racehorses, do you? The road was worse than the rocky road to Dublin!”

“Well, it is all in the lifetime of a fireman,” Wide said, joining the boys, “so we mustn’t complain.”

It took them several hours to fix up the ravages of the bumps and clean out the mud and dust which had worked its way into every crack and crevice.

“Now, there,” said Dick Halstead with satisfaction, “we have done a good morning’s work, haven’t we, boys?”

“Yis, and it will take all afternoon to get the dirt off our own hands!” laughed Terry Rourke.

“Well, you’re a lazy young lout, and it serves you right!” said Dick teasingly.

“Oi don’t allow any rascally young spalpeen to make fun av me!” shouted Terry, pretending to be in a great rage.

He grabbed up a wet, dirty broom from its place against the wall, where Ted had just placed it.

“Take that, ye rascal!” and Terry made a swipe at Dick with the wet broom, spluttering all the boys around him.

“Not on your tintage!” shouted Wide, nimbly dodging. He ducked again just under the swinging broom, and with a quick rush made for the stairs.

Two steps at a time he dashed up to “fix” Terry some way or other when he got up.

Terry sprang after him.

“I’ll git, ye spalpeen!” he shouted, pretending to be fearfully enraged, but just as he did so an exclamation broke from the lips of Sam Bangs, who stood near the street doors of the engine-house.

“Look there, boys!” he shouted. “Gee! We must stop it!”

The consternation in his voice alarmed the Washingtons.

Sam rushed out of the door and the others followed him. Terry stopped his chase and made for the entrance, too.

“Help! Help!” screamed two girlish voices, and the boys saw an alarming sight.

It was a runaway Indian pony hitched to a little buggy, and in it were Kitty Lester and another girl whose face they could not see.

The girls screamed, and the pony ran the faster.

Down the street they raced, and the buggy swung from side to side of the narrow shaded street.

“Great Scott!” said Hal. “They’ll bump into a tree!”

Indeed, they narrowly escaped several bumps of that sort, and the pony tore along nearer all the time.

Dick Halstead, hearing the cries, had rushed to the window and saw his sweetheart’s deadly peril.

“I’ll save her if I die trying!” he gasped to himself as he rushed for the pole and was sliding down it in the flash of an eye.

He ran out into the street, closely following the boys.

The other boys rushed up towards the direction of the runaway, and Dick saw that they would try their best.

“Maybe they’ll fail, and I’ll try football tactics, so I’ll go further down the street,” thought our brave friend.

So he turned away and ran down a few yards in the opposite direction.

It was well that he did, for the boys only frightened the little runaway even more.

The pony swung sideways suddenly as stalwart Sam Bangs leaped for him. The fat youth missed his connection and stumbled and fell with a hard jolt.

“Help!” screamed one of the fair victims faintly, for the poor girls were almost overcome by the terrible danger of their position.

Directly ahead of them, close by the curve of the street, stood a great pile of bricks in front of a new building under course of erection.

If their runaway steed were not stopped they would be plunged head-on against this brick pile. If the pony swerved they would still be in danger, for the swing of the buggy would throw them against it.

Only about fifty yards before this danger was to strike! Hal rushed into the breach and leaped for the pony's head.

"I have him!" murmured Hal to himself as he grappled and caught hold of the rein.

But he counted before his victory, for the pony reared and swung up his head with a vicious jerk.

Crack! and the rein had broken with the movement and the added pull from Hal's weight.

The little rig rushed on past him, and he narrowly escaped being run over by the whirling wheel of the buggy.

"Oh!" screamed the frightened girls, as one after another the boys rushed at the runaway and were brushed aside by the maddened steed.

Only one hope was left now, for all had been passed except Young Wide Awake, who stood with gritted teeth ready for the last desperate endeavor.

On, on rushed the pony, right towards him, and by this time the beast was too desperate to swerve.

So was Dick Halstead! He never flinched nor stirred a muscle.

Nearer and nearer the steed came, the buggy trailing and rocking from side to side behind him, and Kitty Lester holding her companion in her arms, for the girl had fainted from terror!

"Now or never!" thought the gallant young captain of the Washingtons.

With a football tackle he leaped straight for the pony's head. Biff! He struck the runaway animal with a thud, but his sinewy arms clasped around the pony's neck close below the jaw.

The pony rushed on and bucked, trying to wiggle loose from the clinging arms of his assailant.

But Young Wide Awake hung on stoutly and his hold only tightened around the wild-eyed animal's neck.

The pony reared up now in terror and tried to paw at Dick with his forefeet, but our hero was too wily for him.

He clung the tighter and curled up his legs closely against the animal's chest.

The pony tried then to rear back on the buggy, but Dick straightened up suddenly.

He threw his full weight upon the rearing animal's neck and the pony was forced to come down on all fours. Then he started to spurt again, but Young Wide Awake was true to his name.

With a sudden wrench he twisted the animal's neck.

Crash! The pony toppled over sideways from the force of this cruel wrench on his neck. The shaft of the buggy cracked under him, and the pony fell over on his side.

The boys had run up by this time and fat Sam Bangs promptly sat down on the runaway's head.

His mad flight was ended, and Dick rushed to assist the girls from the buggy.

The other girl, Anita, had fainted, but Dick and Kitty soon brought her around by dashing cold water in her face and by chafing her wrists.

"Oh, Dick! How can I ever thank you?" said Kitty.

"You know how, some day!" said Young Wide Awake. And the girl's sweet confusion proved that she knew—and would do so.

CHAPTER XI.

PAYING BACK PARSONS.

The rest of the week passed quietly and uneventfully, for the Neptunes were lying low, as the saying is, hoping and sure that the theft of the groceries would bring the law's vengeance on the Washingtons.

"We'll get even for good and all," said Fred to Gerald and Brick Sunday night as they were walking together.

"Have you told any other fellows in the company?" asked Gerald.

"Not on your life! There is no telling, and it doesn't pay to be too easy with our private affairs, for some one is sure to find out."

"Well," said Brick Houston, "no one can find out from this business, for we have things dead certain. We have tied a can to the Washington Company's tail which they won't lose for some time."

But Brick was counting chickens before they were hatched. A little slip-up in their plans had taken place.

Early that preceding Monday Fred and his father had gone down to his father's office to write out the anonymous letter on the typewriter there, so that there would be no telltale handwriting.

"That's a pretty slick letter," Mr. Parsons had said as he wrote it out first by longhand. "They can never get us in trouble about it if they do find out, for we haven't mentioned any names in direct accusation."

This was true, for he was a slick customer, noted throughout Belmont for his foxiness and hated heartily for it by nearly every honest business man in town.

"We must make a copy of this by carbon sheet, Fred," said he. "I'll lock it in my safe's private box, where it will be absolutely out of reach; but it is better to have the wording in case of need."

"All right, sir," said Fred, and he proceeded to rattle off the anonymous missive on the machine, making a duplicate with a fresh piece of carbon paper which he picked up from the stenographer's desk.

The original of the letter was sealed up in a plain white envelope, and stamped, with the added special delivery stamp on it for rapid service, which we already know caused the letter to be delivered at once to Connors.

"Tear this up," said the elder Parsons, reaching for the handwritten first draft, and he suited the action to the word, tearing it to tiny bits and dumping it out of the window.

None of the girls or clerks had come down yet, it was so early, so they had a clear field for their evil operations.

"This duplicate copy you'd better put in the safe now, father," said the son, and he handed Mr. Parsons the sheet, which was soon locked safely.

But he did not think of the carbon sheet which he had used for duplication.

Just at that moment one of the girls came into the office, and the father and son guiltily started talking about some baseball game.

The girl, Nell Smith by name, looked wonderingly at them. She had never seen either of them down there so early in the morning before, and it looked queer. She noticed the carbon lying on the desk, but said merely:

"Good-morning, Mr. Parsons," ignoring Fred, whom she heartily hated.

Fred looked up at her and said, "Good-morning, Nellie."

But the girl looked away with never a word.

"I'll fix her for that," thought the captain of the Neptunes, and he strolled out to the front of the office, talking to his father in low tones.

"I wonder what's on that carbon?" said the girl. "There's something odd going on here." She cleverly shoved the sheet into her desk and pulled out a half-used one, laying it in its place.

But the action was needless, for the father and son were engrossed in their plot. Later in the morning Nell Smith looked at the carbon, and of course could not read the stamping in reverse, faintly showing against the black of the paper.

"Well, there are more ways of catching a chicken than with fly-paper," she laughed to herself, and she held it up to the mirror in the dressing-room.

There, to her surprise, she read the letter of warning to the police.

"Well, of all things! I know who's back of this, all right," said Nell to herself, for she was familiar with the bitter rivalry between the two fire companies. "We will see about this, Mr. Fred Parsons," she murmured to herself. "I have stood a good deal here because I had to make a living, and I've seen a deal of crookedness, but this is the limit. I won't stand seeing a fine fellow like Dick Halstead jailed for a crime of which he is innocent."

Saturday evening she had to stay late on some extra work, for old Parsons was a hard taskmaster.

Fred Parsons was skulking about outside the office in the dusk.

As Nell Smith came out of the building, hurrying on her way home, he sidled up to her.

"Hello, Nell! You are too good to speak to me nowadays, aren't you?" he said.

"I don't want anything to do with you, Fred Parsons," she said. "I don't like you, nor the crowd you go with, and that's all there is about it."

"Oh, don't be such a goodie-good, Nell. Come on, go to supper with me and we'll have a jolly time and go to the theater afterward."

Nell quickened her stride and tried to walk away from him. She noticed to her disgust that he had been drinking.

"Aw! Nell, don't run away! Give me a kiss, Nell! You're not so much better than any other girl, you know!"

The brutal fellow rushed toward the girl.

She screamed, but the street was dark and no one was in sight. She ran toward the corner, where the thoroughfare went into Main Street, but Parsons was close upon her.

"I'll make you kiss me!" he cried, and he grabbed her around the waist, brutally pulling her white face over to him.

"Help! Help!" screamed the frightened girl.

With his noxious liquor-scented breath the cowardly fellow strove to force a kiss upon her lips, but suddenly a stalwart figure came around the corner on the run.

It was Dick Halstead, who had heard the cry for assistance!

Biff! He landed a straight-from-the-shoulder blow on the side of Fred Parsons' face, and the captain of the Neptunes staggered back cursing, and stumbling, fell into the wet gutter.

"Why, it's Nell Smith!" cried Dick.

"Oh, Wide, take me away from that ruffian—take me away from here!" cried the poor girl hysterically.

"You bet I will!" cried Wide. "I'd like to wallop him first!"

"No, no! Take me home!" she cried. "Take me home!"

Dick saw the wisdom of getting her nerves quieted and so he hurried her down to the car and boarded it with her.

"Dick, I have something here which may interest you," she said as soon as she got control of herself. "I've been saving it until the time of that trial, but I'd better give it to you now."

She took the carbon from her handbag and gave it to Dick, explaining how it came into her possession.

"The missing evidence!" he cried. "Are you certain about this, Nell?"

"Of course, Dick," she said.

"Then let's stop off when we get to the Lesters' and we will show this to Kitty's father. He is advising me all along in this matter."

They did this, and the hospitable gentleman insisted that they have a little supper party then and there.

"That is a great bit of evidence, Nell," said Mr. Lester. "Will you testify in court as to how you found it?"

"Yes, indeed, I will," answered the girl, her eyes flashing; "even though I know it will cost me my job as stenographer with old Parsons."

"Well, little girl, it won't cost you any job, for right this very minute I'll offer you a position at my office with more pay every week than you've been getting. I want clever girls. Will you take it?"

Of course she did. They had a lot of fun that evening at the table, and plans were laid for the baffling of the Parsons plot.

"I don't quite understand how these things were stolen—that's all," mused Mr. Lester. "Nell, did you see any suspicious-looking characters in the office this last week? Try to remember if you can."

"Let me see," said Nell. "Yes—oh, I recollect! There were four tough-looking fellows came in and went to his private office on Tuesday."

"Aha! What did they look like?"

"Well, one had a very red face, and the others were thin fellows."

"Just the very fellows that we've been thinking they were!" exclaimed Mr. Lester. "Dick, that is the description of Bill Squiggins, who was run in by Connors with his gang last night for robbing a freight car. They all four are in custody now. Let's go down to headquarters at once."

This they did, and Nell Smith identified the four, who had undoubtedly been in to get the rest of their money from Parsons.

"Why don't you fellows confess and get these boys out of trouble?" demanded Connors. "You fellows will get long terms as it is for this bunch of robberies that we've proved on you!"

"Aw, we're jist as innercent as spring lambs wid mint sauce!" said red-faced Bill in his hoarse, whisky voice.

"None of those fly remarks from you, fellow," commanded the officer, "or I'll make it even hotter for you than we had intended. You'd better just admit that Parsons put you up to this whole deal to get those young fellows in trouble. If you admit it I'll try to intercede with the district attorney for you and have your terms lightened."

"Say, captin, I wouldn't peach on a pal, anyway, if it was so!"

"Then it's so?" blurted the assistant chief sharply.

"No, it ain't!" answered the crook, stopping himself just in time. "But I'll tell you wot, captin, if you'll agree to make it light fer us fellers we'll admit this—that we did dat job in de Milton Smith Company's storage rooms, and we put it up in dat engine-house 'cause we t'ought de gal-lant young fire-fighters should have a present."

"That's enough for our purpose, Mr. Connors," said Lester, "although I should have liked to land that Parsons tribe behind the bars, too."

"Well, you rascals, sign this written confession," said the assistant chief of police, and the four fellows scrawled some sort of marks which were witnessed by Callahan and the sergeant.

"Oi am shure glad you byes are not in trouble over this!" said the kind-hearted sergeant.

"We're a lot gladder, you bet!" said Wide with a laugh.

"Well, you can go home now, and we'll fix this all in court and dismiss the case Monday morning first thing," said Connors.

You can guess what a jollification the Washingtons had the following Monday in their Holmes Street engine-house, after the judge curtly dismissed the case.

The Neptunes had attended the case in a body, headed by the Parsons, father and son.

"Case dismissed!" cried the judge, waving a paper.

"I object, your honor!" cried Parsons. "What is the meaning of this?"

"It means, sir," said the judge, looking at him with a piercing glance, "that these young men have been cleared of all suspicion. And I may further remark in my official capacity that it would give me great pleasure to continue the case with other defendants, if it were not that certain foxes had covered their tracks a little too well!"

"This is an insult!" cried Parsons senior, springing up again like a jack-in-the-box.

"This is a guilty conscience!" retorted the judge fiercely, "and every one in the court-room knows exactly what and whom I mean. If you make another remark in this room I'll fine you fifty dollars for contempt of court!"

"Say, Dick," said Mr. Lester, as he leaned over to murmur in Young Wide Awake's ear, "I guess we're pretty even, after all!"

THE END.

A picnic in the woods; a terrible forest fire; a new line of mean tricks from the Neptunes; a double-edged battle against fire and water—here are just a few of the exciting incidents in our next story, "YOUNG WIDE AWAKE'S STRUGGLE IN THE DARK; OR, TRAPPED IN A FLOODED CELLAR." It's a good one! Number 134! Out next week!

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CHOICE READING MATTER.

A tramp who had been thrown from a Western Pacific train set fire to a freight train at Westminster, near Los Angeles, and burned four carloads of early Bermuda onion sets consigned to truck farmers in Texas. The fire also destroyed the only automobile onion planter in the world. Early Bermudas will now have to be grown from seed from the Canary Islands. The loss on the onions was \$10,000.

A new version of Portia's caskets is to be seen in a bootshop in London. In the window is a padlocked glass box containing five golden sovereigns. A notice proclaims that all purchasers at this establishment will be offered a large number of keys, from which they may select one, and with it attempt to unlock the box. The person who is lucky enough to pick out the right key is then enriched by picking up the five pounds. It is a pretty lottery, and at the worst no one's effort can be bootless.

Says the Chicago Journal: "The Germans have installed in the port of Wilhelmshoefen a Krupp cannon which cost the trifling sum of \$79,000, every shot of which costs \$1,650—\$697 for the projectile, \$185 for the charge which expels the shell, and \$838 for the checking apparatus. This gun cannot fire more than ninety-five shots before it is completely useless. Because of the repeated action of the explosives erosions are made in the bore which destroy the quality of the steel and the piece can no longer be used without danger of bursting."

Kreuka Lake is one of the most attractive of the great chain of lakes in the interior of New York State. Bluff Point at its head is a bold promontory, which rises grandly and impressively. It was upon the banks of this lake that the famous "Jemima Wilkinson" founded a colony nearly three generations ago, and announced that she could walk upon the water of the lake. A large crowd gathered to see her undertake the experiment. Turning to her followers she asked: "Have you all faith that I can walk upon the water?" "We have! We have!" her followers replied. "Then there is no use in my undertaking to do so," she replied. "If ye have faith ye shall be saved without my walking upon the water."

The moose is fast disappearing from the northern forests of Minnesota, according to Zion's Herald. The game wardens have failed to cope successfully with the greedy hunters bent on procuring the flesh of the animals for meat, tanning their hides, and selling their horns. The moose, the largest member of the deer family, with his flat shovel horns and proboscis-like nose, seems to belong to a prehistoric age, just as the hippopotamus and the great auk appear as anachronisms. The moose in Minnesota, driven from the forests by the swarms of mosquitoes, have fearlessly invaded the clearings of the settlers, and fallen easy victims to their destructive firearms.

The buffalo has disappeared from the Western plains, and the fact that the moose is fast following that noble animal into the oblivion of the "happy hunting grounds," is causing lovers of nature throughout the country sincere regret.

Education is under the French mother's constant supervision. The Bible is never put into a child's hands. Spiritual history is very much bowdlerized, and no story is told in the works reserved for the young that would imply that any of the kings of Judea had ever been guilty of the slightest indiscretion. The expurgation of profane history is still more complete, and the average French girl grows up with no idea that any scandal ever occurred in the days of the Bourbon kings. As the "jeune fille" advances in years she may have professors of history, Latin, dancing or music, but no carefully brought-up girl is ever left alone with a professor. If she wishes to pass examinations and has to attend courses of lectures, she is always accompanied by her governess, who is bound to report if anything in any shape or form bordering upon impropriety has been said. When, therefore, a French girl first goes into the world she knows very little.

RIB TICKLERS.

Young Fitznoodle (with a yawn)—Ya-as, weally, it cost me five thousand a year just to live, don't y'know. Farmer Hardpan—Don't you pay it! 'Tain't wuth it!

Cook—Phere is the missus and master gone? Second Girl—They went to the Italian opera. Cook—Moy! moy! That's quare. Phere did the doorty Oytalians learn singin'?

Something more than quiet humor is in this paragraph, printed at the end of the Edmonton Opera House regulations by Manager Brandon: "Any old ladies afraid of taking cold may keep on their hats or bonnets."

Winkle—See that little woman in black over there? I'll bet there are more men crazy about that woman than any woman in town. Hinkle—What makes you think so? Winkle—Well, she's the matron out at the insane asylum.

A Billville jury, slow in arriving at a decision, and feeling the keen demands of appetite, sent the following note to the judge: "If you don't send us somethin' to eat quick, we'll have to find the defendant guilty; but if you'll send us three meals a day, we'll stay here till he's innocent."

Lady—I wish you would call at the office of Mr. Oldrich, 999 Fashion Avenue, contrive to have some conversation with the venerable gentleman, and, so far as you are able, examine into his physical condition. I desire to know how long he is likely to live. Physician—Certainly. Are you his wife? Lady—No; but I have a chance to be.

"Have you heard about the way Hiram Doolittle treated his wife? The poor woman had to keep a cash account, which he would go over every night. 'Look here, Susan,' he growled. 'Mustard plasters, 50 cents; three teeth extracted, \$2. There's \$2.50 in one day spent for your own private pleasure. Do you think I'm made of money?'"

Professor Charles Zeublin, of the University of Chicago, was reiterating at a dinner his belief that most American philanthropy failed of its object. "Many a philanthropist, his heart beating with love of his fellow man, would be pulled up with a round turn," said Professor Zeublin, "if he knew what really became of the last hundred or the last thousand that he gave to charity. Yes, he would be taken as completely aback as the young man who said proudly to his girl in the moonlight: 'Tell me, my own, when did you first discover that you loved me?' 'When I found myself getting angry every time any one called you a fool,' she replied."

A STARTLING ADVENTURE

By Horace Appleton.

Once only in my life have I seen an ideal hunter's paradise; a region where the game was as plentiful, as big and as bold as the most thrilling hunters' stories have ever pictured it.

It was years ago, when the rough fortunes of my youth left me for a fortnight at Tacames.

Tacames, or Atacames, lies on the western coast of what is now included in the State of Colombia, South America.

I was the surgeon of a whaling ship which put in there for a supply of fresh food, to check the attack of scurvy, which had made its unwelcome appearance among the crew, and we were detained by the sickness of the captain for four weeks.

The place consists, or then consisted, of not more than eighteen or twenty houses—mere cabins—built of canes and set on posts about ten feet high.

The port is an open roadstead, into which, when the wind is southwest, roll the long swells of the Pacific, breaking in white surf upon the shore.

But the town, though low-lying, is beautiful; with high, irregular notched hills towering above it in the background, and the dense tropical forest closing in around it on all but the seaward side.

A small river, nearly dry at the time we were there, flows in from up among the mountains.

It had been a time of intense drought, following great heat, and nearly half of the poor people were sick of a species of local cholera.

After treating a few cases, I learned its nature and cause, and by liberal drafts on our medicine-chest, I was able to cure nearly fifty persons within a few days.

I thus earned the real, heartfelt gratitude of the entire population.

Never was a young man more popular in a little hamlet.

I had but to express a wish, when half a dozen would set off of their own accord at my service.

Among my patients was the little daughter of Don Pechos, the leading "estanciero," or owner, at Tacames; himself but a half-breed, however, though possessed of large herds in the back country.

Little Diona, or "Tita," as they called her, lay very low indeed in the last stages of the disorder, which I was fortunate in being able to check.

On the fourth day, when the child had mended visibly and evinced an appetite for broth, her father, a rather grave man, who had before given up all hopes of her recovery, came to me too much moved to speak for the deep joy he felt; but in the grasp of his hand there was something which expressed more than words.

Next morning came a more tangible evidence of his gratitude—though like a true gentleman he made it an entirely secondary matter—in the shape of a beautiful black horse, fully broken to the back, together with a fine saddle and bridle ornamented with silver.

This fine animal Don Pechos begged me to accept and use as a "trifling token" of his regard and friendship; and I accepted it, of course, only for the time I was at Tacames.

Vasco was the horse's name.

He was perfectly broken to the saddle, after the Spanish method; and it is to one of my rides on Vasco's back that my story relates.

Another of my patients was an Indian, named "Jaca"—that, at least, was the name he bore at Tacames—whose history was a most singular one.

He was not a South American, but had been kidnapped along with three others, from a tribe far up toward Oregon, by a whaler which had been left short-handed on that coast.

The captain had enticed these Indians on board his ship by promises of presents, then seized them and hastily set sail.

Two years later, on the voyage home to New Bedford, the whaler touched at Tacames, and Jaca was set ashore without so much as "Thank ye" for his services.

Jaca had gained a considerable knowledge of English, and Indian though he was, I found him a not uncongenial spirit, and possessed of keen native intelligence.

Here, as in that far-off northern home which he would never see again, Jaca was a hunter, and made use of a tremendous bow, which I could no more draw than I could have bent an old Roman catapult.

As soon as my duties as physician grew a little less urgent, I rode out every morning on botanical excursions—for the flora there was new and most interesting to me—and on hunts with Jaca.

Since first landing, I had every day heard the yelping of wild beasts out in the woods, sometimes sounding like a pack of hounds in full cry, and at night their howls, barks and roars were incessant.

Jaca's brief but very graphic and matter-of-fact little stories of adventure added still further to the zest with which I set off with him.

Nearly every morning upon mounting Vasco for one of these trips, Don Pechos would gravely advise me to beware of the "tigers," as the people there called the large black and yellow jaguars of that region.

But I supposed that the fear in which the inhabitants stood of these animals resulted mainly from their lack of fire-arms.

There was not a serviceable musket in Tacames.

I had a good short-barreled double gun, with a strap for slinging it across my shoulders.

Percussion caps had then but recently come into use.

There were a number of roads or bridle-paths leading back from Tacames through the forests.

For a mile or more around the village there were low, dense thorn thickets, overrun with vines; then larger trees, standing close, and very tall, took the place of these, and here the chatter of monkeys would always assail our ears.

The monkeys, or apes, of this district were the giants of their race, and every whit as large as the seven or eight year old children in our city streets, with strangely aged, hideous faces.

Half a dozen would often be gamboling in a tree-top together.

On catching sight of us passing underneath, one of them would give a droll, sharp cry, like "Halloa!"

Then all of them would come bounding and swinging down by the branches and lianas to peep at us.

Their ugly yet comically grinning visages seemed to say:

"How d'ye do?"

Several times they were uncommonly bold, stretching down their long arms to snatch at our caps and the silver bangles on Vasco's headgear; and so large and formidable did they look that two or three times I unslung my gun.

But Jaca, laughing heartily, said:

"No tira!" (Don't fire.)

At each fresh start of mine he would laugh the harder, and say:

"Dey fun. Dey trick. Dey like look you."

Jaca's name for these monkeys was "wood-folks," and he always spoke of them as if they were human beings.

Upon the morning of my adventure we had come out into the forest—Jaca walking rapidly by Vasco's side—and passing by a valley between two mountains had emerged into a very heavily timbered tract beyond, where there was no undergrowth.

Here were hundreds of ruby-tinted birds singing joyously, blending their songs with the harsh squalls of parrots.

But some strange tracks in the mud where we forded the river had absorbed Jaca's attention.

He wished to follow these, and, as I chose to ride along the meadow to collect specimens of the, to me, new plants, we agreed to separate for the time and meet there two hours later.

For a mile or two I went on through grass so high that it brushed Vasco's sides, only drawing rein here and there to pluck a rare bunch of flowers.

Several times, I heard the cries of wild animals off in the woods, and saw where they were running in the grass.

At length I came to where a herd of fifty or sixty horses were feeding, keeping close together, yet all moving on at a pretty good pace.

The jaguars, I was told, dare not attack a herd thus compacted together.

It is only when one imprudently strays off that it is throttled.

This was one of Don Pechos' semi-wild droves.

As I passed, Vasco neighed repeatedly, and a colt—a lithe, beautiful, black three-year-old—trotted out from his fellows and joined us.

I struck at it with my stick and snapped my fingers to scare it back; but still it trotted about and followed Vasco—pawing in the grass, snorting, fairly rearing in its playful antics.

The heat of the day was coming on, and I presently drew up beneath the great drooping fronds of a miriti palm, to be out of the scorching sun-rays for a minute ere turning back; and I recollect that the black colt, frolicsome as ever, was nibbling at Vasco's jowl, when suddenly both horses started violently.

At the same moment I heard a slight crash of brush out in the thick swamp, a little to the right of the palm.

The ears of both horses were bent intently forward, and I felt Vasco begin to tremble and his sides to dilate under me.

Every nerve and muscle in his body seemed to grow tense and hard as wire.

At first I saw nothing, and patting my horse's neck, I spoke soothingly to him, at the same time reaching round for my carbine.

But before I could slip the strap both Vasco and the colt wheeled, quick as lightning, and ran.

At the same instant I heard two loud roars, but was so nearly unseated that my horse had run several hundred yards before I could sufficiently recover my balance to look back.

One glance showed me what a fate I had escaped.

For bounding along after the horses were two enormous black and yellow jaguars.

In their eagerness they seemed to fly rather than run.

Their bounds were not high, but long.

They seemed to skim the ground, their enormous tails standing out straight behind and their sleek, mottled sides fairly glistening in the sun.

As they flew along, each gave vent to an eager, yelping noise, in chorus to the other; and so rapidly did they come on that, though the horses were running for life, I expected to be overtaken.

I might have unslung my piece and shot them.

But I confess that in my terror of falling into the clutches of these monsters I did nothing but grasp Vasco's neck and mane with all my strength.

Nor could I have checked or reined him a hair's breadth had my life depended on it.

The jaguars, as I knew by their yelps and the glimpses I caught over my shoulder, were at the horses' heels. And my gun, flying up by its loose strap at every bound, nearly beat me off.

As we sped through grass and bushes, my only thought was that Vasco would join the herd we had previously passed, and that together the horses might drive off the "tigers."

But the herd was not now at the place where I had seen it.

On we rushed in our wild flight, till suddenly we came to a slough in the grass and reeds.

With his first leap Vasco went belly deep into it, and I was thrown headlong among the rushes into the soft mud.

The horse floundered on, partly over me, and got through, but a frightfully shrill scream from the colt close at hand made my blood run chill.

Dashing the mud and water from my eyes, I struggled up and saw, through the reeds, the young horse lying mired a few rods below, while on the opposite bank crouched one of the jaguars, wriggling and twisting his body like a huge cat.

For a moment it poised, then jumped thirty feet or more, and alighted plump on the horse's back.

Another fearful cry from the poor creature blended with the tiger's fierce growl as it buried its fangs and claws in the colt's glossy hide.

For a moment there was a tremendous struggle, then the horse sank passive and limp, with one wild, deep moan.

The other jaguar, without joining his mate in the attack, was waiting on the bank, walking up and down, lashing the air with its long tail, and venting its eager thirst for blood in the most terrific roars.

Too busy to notice me in the reeds, the ugly yet splendid brutes growled and gloated over their victim.

But what would have been my fate had the horse got through the slough?

Truly, his life was given for mine.

Slowly I crept out of the bog and stole away, drenched and plastered with mud from head to foot.

I had gone half a mile, perhaps, along my morning track through the meadow, when I met Jaca.

He had seen Vasco go past with empty saddle and flying stirrups and was coming back to look me up.

Seeing my condition, he first started, then grinned broadly.

It took but a few words to understand my adventure, and he at once proposed to go back and kill the tigers.

So urgent and so confident was he of success that I at length consented to it, and we went cautiously back to the edge of the slough.

The jaguars had drawn the body of the colt out of the slough and were feasting upon it.

One of them, indeed, seemed already to have got his fill, and lay outstretched a few feet off; the other was still gorging himself.

"Tira," Jaca whispered; "take the one eatin' horse."

I had recharged my gun heavily, putting three balls in each barrel.

The distance across the slough was not more than ninety or a hundred feet.

When I fired, the beast gave a convulsed leap off the horse and fell with a loud yell in the grass.

The other started to his feet, glared across for a moment, but before I could get him went out of sight through the grass and bushes.

Meantime, Jaca was boldly wading through the slough.

Drawing his knife, he approached the disabled tiger and killed him.

We then withdrew a little, thinking the other might show itself, for we heard it roaring at a distance.

It did not approach, however, and after stripping off the skin from the one we had killed, Jaca advised a speedy retreat from the spot.

It was a toilsome walk for me back to Tacames.

Vasco had arrived several hours before, and Don Pechos had mustered a party to search for me.

Some 30,857 "deadheads," aggregating 1,300,000 feet of lumber, have been pulled out of the bay in the Mississippi River a short distance above Little Falls. The method employed in raising the "deadheads," which are waterlogged with but one end floating, is as follows: Part of the crew approach the "deadhead" in a bateau, and reach down with their pickpoles and catch the sunken end with the spur on the pole, and bring this end to the surface. An iron spike is then driven into the sunken end of the log and a stout rope attached. When several logs have been harnessed in this fashion the ropes are brought to the shore and horses hitched to them. The tension on the ropes is sufficient to raise the sunken end of the log and the "deadheads" are floated to shore, where they are skidded up to the bank and left to dry. A large log jam formed in this bay a few years ago and backed up the river two or three miles and as a consequence there are thousands of the "deadheads." The whole river for four or five miles north of the city is a veritable mine and the number of logs taken out last summer is only a small portion of those there.

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